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Mohawk Nat.

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MOHAWK NAT.

A TALE OF THE GREAT NORTH WOODS.

BY W. J. HAMILTON,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING POCKET NOVELS:

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MOLAWK NAT.

A TALE OF THE GREAT NORTH WOODS

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MOHAWK NAT.

CHAPTER I.

THE MEN IN THE FOREST.

THE period at which this story opens has often been chosen for the foundation of a historical novel; yet the field and time comprise many an incident of dramatic interest untouched by the pen of romance. This was the period when the English and French struggled for supremacy in America. Then, every prominent point of land, every island, every settlement along the northern frontier, had its own tale of midnight surprise, of homes made desolate, of villages laid waste. The struggle was, for a long while, confined to the territory south of the St. Lawrence river. The French displayed wonderful activity in their struggle for power. Traversing hundreds of miles of almost unbroken wilderness, to fall suddenly upon some exposed town, they struck repeated and discouraging blows, made their name a terror, and bore away to an almost hopeless captivity hundreds of English adherents, even penetrating to the Mohawk valley region in their menacing advances.

A series of years passed before the English did much to restrain the violence and audacity of their antagonists. In the first years of the warfare the British were commanded by men ill-qualified to cope with their daring and zealous adversaries. Such chiefs as Frontenac and Montcalm had not their match among the English officers, and not until the young and Leroic Wolfe came upon the stage, ending his short life so nobly on the blood-stained fields of Abraham, was the French power broken.

At the time this story opens Wolfe was unknown to fame, and the Generals in command preferred the safety of the large towns to the dangers and privations of the frontier. The border-men consequently suffered severely, and this led them

to devise ways and means of protecting themselves from these inroads of their foe.

The frequent incursions of the French had caused the inhabitants of the region north of the Mohawk to organize, ready to fly to arms at a moment's warning. These men were eminently fitted, by sturdy strength and spirit, to deal with their crafty and implacable enemy, in whose service the savages found full exercise for their tiger-like propensities. To hit the bull's-eye at three hundred yards, and drive a nail at fifty paces with a rifle-ball, was an easy performance for those Mohawk rangers; and they were as practiced in the wiles of savage warfare as the Indians themselves, and knew as well the paths through the mountains. Such men, choosing their own officers and believing in them, were far superior to the best troops sent out by the crown—Scotch and Irish automatons, who did well in fighting a civilized foe upon the open plain, or in forcing fortifications; but in the woods, fighting savages, they were, in most cases, extremely inefficient.

A group of men were gathered on the north bank of the Mohawk, not far from what is now the village of Rome. Evidently inhabitants of the region, they were dressed in the strong "homespun" so well suited to their rough life. Hardy, wiry-looking fellows, they formed the background of our civilization, and from their loins sprung many of the distinguished sons of the Empire State. Only two of the group demand particular attention in this connection. One was a young man of prepossessing appearance, standing on the bank of the stream, looking carelessly to the south. His height was fully six feet one in his moccasins, with a frame admirably proportioned. His dress was somewhat different from that of his companions, being of heavy stuff, of a bluish color, formed into a sort of blouse gathered at the waist by a buckskin belt. His legs were cased in tight-fitting leggings of the same material, ornamented by rows of buttons on the sides, and drawn under a pair of neat moccasins at the ankles. On his head was a black hat, with a broad brim a good protection from the rays of the sun. This hat was ornamented by a drooping feather of a dark color. His face, somewhat rigid in expression, was not wanting in manly

beauty of a good type. On his upper lip was a heavy mustache, but the rest of his face was shaved clean. One hand was laid on the muzzle of a long rifle, the stock of which was richly ornamented with silver and ivory-work. The barrel was of beautiful finish for the period. But few of the border-men could *afford* to carry such a weapon.

Another man sat near by, his hands clasped about his knees, staring into the water at his feet, and whistling in a low key. His hair, of a peculiar yellowish-white, was allowed to grow down to his shoulders, while his thoroughly bronzed face was covered by a heavy beard of the same color. A casual look at this face would not have impressed the observer favorably; "an idle, careless, useless fellow, not apt to set the world on fire by his deeds," would have been the first impression. A closer study, however, revealed a sharp, determined eye, a thin, closely-compressed upper lip, a nose with something of the semblance of an eagle's beak. Gazing at his physical development, the wonderful length of his arms, and the snaky ridges of muscle rising beneath, proclaimed a man of Titan strength. His rifle, not inferior to the one in the hands of his tall companion, lay across his lap; now and then he patted it softly, as if he regarded it as an old friend.

"What are you thinking about, Nat?" said the younger of the two. "You look as if your wits had gone wool-gathering."

"Mebbe you ar' right," said he, looking up with a start. "I war a good way off then. Never mind, I'm here now, and my name is Nat Hazard. What are we going to do?"

"Stay here to-night, I suppose, since we are not likely to catch the red devils who burned Tom Turner's house."

"'They ain't gone fur," said Nat, in a sleepy, indolent tone, as if talking unconsciously; then, speaking with animation: "'They ain't half so 'fraid of us ez they used to be. Served us right, too, a set of vagabones, that don't set no more store by their housen than to let a lot of lopin', caterwaulin' red-skins burn 'em. Lucky I wa'n't here."

"What would you have done?"

"What would I 'a done? I'd 'a walked into every tribe from Niagara to Montreal, and wiped them off the face of the 'arth. I could do it, too. What's an Injin?—an' what's

a ~~trick~~ of them? Can ye make them any better than a set of mis'erable, hoss-stealin', house-burnin', murderin', scalpin' vagabones? Course ye kain't. It stands to reason ye kain't, 'cause anybody knows they *ar'*. I'll take a contract to wipe out the name of Injin from this colony in jest seven weeks by the clock, ef anybody thinks it wuth while to pay me for the trouble."

"All stuff, Nat. Many a year must pass before we shall be rid of these human tigers, and we shall have trouble enough with them. What with unscrupulous and daring military men and Jesuit priests with the craft of Satan, the French have matters their own way with the Indians."

"That's what makes me mad," said Nat, wrathfully. "Our Ginerals ain't wuth an old moccasin; they lacks pluck and sense. I know what a Jesuit is: he's a snake; take my word for it, he's nothin' more nor less than a pizon, crawlin' rip-tyle. How do you kill a snake? You put your foot on him and scrunch his head, don't you? How do you kill a Jesuit? *Scrunch* him, of course; that's the only way; and may I eat lizard soup when I forgits to curse these mis'erable agents of blood and Popery."

"You can not say any thing too hard of the Jesuits, Nat," said the other. "They have been at the bottom of all the deviltry practiced by the Indians during the last ten years. The worst of it is, you never can catch the oily, hypocritical rascals. They are too sharp for our stolid English ways, or, rather, too full of deceit and treachery."

"That's a smart thing for *you* to say, ain't it now? You, Captain Lewis Miller, a man that everybody knows is as good an officer as there is in the colonial service, an' better than any Gin'ral in the rig'lars anywhar! I'm ashamed on ye."

"Draw it mild, Nat; I'm buttered enough now. Say I am better than the Governor-General."

"I *do* say it. Ye *ar'*!"

"Thank you. But, that will not bring back the goods stolen from Tom Turner, nor set up his house? How are we to catch the thieves?"

"And thar Tom Turner sits, a-lookin' as pleasant as ef his fam'ly wasn't out in the cold, with no better shelter than a limestun cave. He ain't got no feelin' he ain't. He don't

want to ketch no Injins. He wouldn't raise the ha'r of one on 'em ef you brought the red villain tew him."

"Wouldn't I?" growled the man called Turner. "Try me and see."

"You may have a chaine in an hour ef you want to," said Nat. "Injins? Pshaw! They ain't two miles away, an' the trail growin' warmer every minnit. All I hope is, that they'll come down on Dorrup* and lay it even with the ground. They will, too. Mebbe Mohawk Nat is a nat'ral fool. I don't know; but he's got fight in him, *big* enough for all thar is to do in these parts."

"What are you angry about?" said Lewis Miller. "I'm sure we are ready to go on if there is any prospect of doing any thing. But I confess that I thought the Indians had got into the hills; and what is the use of following them there?"

"What's the use of follerin' 'em anywhar?" retorted Nat. "We might as well hev staid to hum and let Tom Turner build another house for the red niggers to burn. Sarve him right ef they give him a light every year. I ain't goin' to raise a hand to help him any more, I ain't. He won't help hisself, but I'm in fur Injins jist as the red niggers is in fur beaver."

"What do you want us to do?"

"Foller 'em; drive 'em to the frigid's but what we ketch 'em. 'Tain't the fust time they've come a-plungin' down on the Mohawk kentry and burned housen. I ain't goin' to stand it, nohow. 'Sides, they won't go on fast when they git in the hills. We allus leave off, like a pack of idiots, jist when we've got 'em."

"Then you think they have halted?" said Lewis.

"*Right*, ye ar'. They allus halt an' take breath. Now, they ar' somewhar on Canada creek. I knows it. They like that place. It's a wild, noisy spot. The water is black, as ef Injins hed been washin' in it up above. But, it turns white at the falls. I've seen it *red* afore now."

"You have had a fight at the falls, then?"

"Bet ye. A nice little scrimmage as ye would wish to see. Now, let's pack up an' git on. We ken hev a fight jist ez well ez not. I'm a-wastin' away fur a row. You

* Schenectady was called Dorrup by the Dutch.

see I'm a far-away cousin of old Captain Church, an' I don't s'pose I shall ever git old Ben's blood out of my veins. He was a born Injin-fighter, an' I like it, *some*."

"It's only a tramp of a dozen miles and back," said the captain. "Come on, boys."

The men rose and followed him at a quick pace. Mohawk Nat walked by his side, stretching his long legs in a manner which forced even Lewis Miller to step out, in order to keep up with him. The men straggled along in the rear, speaking only in low tones, for they were practiced foresters, and knew the subtlety of their enemies. The ground over which they passed soon after leaving the main river became broken, and then they reached Canada creek, whose black waters glided down to join the Mohawk. The Indians firmly believed that this stream was baleful to the white man. Its darkness, its silent flow were warnings to him. Nat stooped, and took a little water in his hand.

"Ye see how black it was afore I lifted it," he said, watching the bright drops as they trickled through his fingers, "but the minnit the water touches a white man, it turns white. It don't look so in an Injin's hand, nor yet a nigger's. Ye may laugh, but it's *so* !"

"How do you account for it, Nat?" asked Lewis.

"Easy enough. The white men ar' goin' to hev it some day, an' the Injins must go."

"It does not need a prophet to tell that," said Lewis. "White men will have the sway. Providence never designed this goodly land to be given up to savages and wild beasts."

"I don't know so much about *Providence*," said Nat. "But we've got the best weepsons; an' if you watch things ez they run, you'll find the best weepsons ginerally hev the day. Then, thar's too much *peth* in their aboriginal bones. They're *soople*, Injins is, I grant ye; *soople* an' *spry*, but they ain't *strong*. Leastways, not many of 'em, an' they'll hev to go down, in the long run. They like rum too well, for another thing. I'll risk anybody bein' strong long, that kin drink New England rum. It's a awful bev'ridge, fit only for a Nantuck fisherman, who eats clams, shells and innards."

"You are right, Nat. A man must have a cast-iron stomach to endure rum-drinking."

"I've seen New England rum so strong," said Nat, with an appearance of the greatest candor, "that it would eat a hole in a board two inches thick. A friend of mine from Albany wanted to wash his gun one day, and he thought it would be a gay thing to wash his gun in sperrits. The durned stuff e't the bar'l off afore he c'u'd wash it out."

"Isn't that *rather* fishy, Nat?" said Lewis, smiling.

"Mebbe you'd like to doubt my word, Mister Independent Captain of Independent Rangers? Perhaps you don't remember my name, an' the day of the month I was borned in? Ef ye've forgot it, I'll tell ye. My name is Nat Hazard; I'm forty years old on the tenth of this month; an' I kin lick any man out of his moccasins that goes to say I'm a liar."

"I would not doubt your earnest word for the world, Nat, but that was very *active* spirits used in that gun."

"Actyve? I guess so! A man must travel rather fast to keep up with them. I don't know jest whar the man is and whar the rifle is, but ef I could find 'em I'd show 'em to ye and satisfy ye that it is all right. But hush. What is this?"

He stooped and took something from the ground. It was an Indian moccasin, small, and beautifully ornamented with bead-work; not a man's moccasin, that was evident. A certain daintiness of form and make showed that it was the property of a woman.

"Git out," said Nat. "What's the meaning of this, now? A woman in the hills? Darn my buttons ef this don't beat my time. A woman with a war-party of Hurons? Good gracious!"

Lewis, taking the moccasin, examined it minutely. It had been thrown away by its owner, worn out. The sole was ragged and torn off in many places. The pretty article passed from hand to hand, and elicited various comments from the party.

"Mebbe she don't belong to our crowd?" said Tom Turner. "Mout be."

"Yes, she does," replied Nat. "Don't ye see that their tracks cover hers, and are jest ez fresh? I hope I know an old track. We've got Injins somewhar nigh us this minnit. They ain't gone fur in the hills."

As he spoke he was looking with a cautious eye at the

line of bushes about them. All at once his eyes began to blaze as if they were fires, suddenly lighted. He gave Lewis a hint to put him upon his guard. His quick eye had detected an Indian glancing at them from the bushes.

CHAPTER II.

BARBED ARROW.

THE quick eyes of Lewis Miller soon saw what it was which caused the change in the demeanor of Nat Hazard. A moment before the ranger seemed a listless fellow, with no thought beyond the action of New England rum. Instantly the braggadocio and trifier disappeared and gave place to the keen-witted, active forester, one whom no danger could daunt, nor common intellect outwit. He grasped his rifle with a firmer hand, and, as his quick glance passed from man to man, they understood, though they could not perceive the object, that something had happened which must put them on the alert.

Not knowing what it was, they allowed the ranger to take the initiative, which he did by shifting his position gradually so that a single bound would take him to the thicket, from which the bright orbs were looking out at the party. In the midst of a sentence which was spoken in his ordinary, drawling tone, he made a sudden leap and lighted upon the back of the spy as he was trying to spring to his feet. There was a short struggle, and then Mohawk Nat emerged from the thicket, dragging after him a young Indian, whose sullen, savage face was stamped with anger and fear. All were well enough versed in the peculiarities of the race to see that he was one of the great Huron nation, a nation always on the side of the French and by whom most of the massacres which made this such a bloody period, were perpetrated. He was dressed in a hunting-shirt of tanned buckskin, reaching nearly to the knee, a pair of moccasins of moose-hide, and was armed with a long knife and a gun of French make. He held the knife

in his right hand, but was restrained from using it by the iron grasp Nat had upon his wrist. For an Indian, he had a rather fine face, and his dress showed him to be somewhat of a dandy in his way. He wore a head-gear of eagle-feathers, and his knife had a handle ornamented by strange devices. The moment he saw he was trapped he gave up the struggle, and Nat dashed into the circle of whites, dragging him along.

"*Thar* he is," he said, releasing his prisoner when he was once in the circle; "and you tell me ef he ain't as pooty a yooth as ye would wish to see."

The Indian folded his arms and looked from face to face in a stolid manner, like one who yielded himself to his fate, whatever it might be.

"Speak to him, Nat," said Lewis. "Ask him what he is doing here."

"What's the use of that?" demanded Nat, with the air of a man propounding an axiom. "Don't we know he'll lie about it? 'Cause why: an Indian never tells the truth to a white man, when he ken help it. An' this feller won't, no more than the rest. I know what he's after. He's after scalps; *that's* what he's after, scuttle him!"

"Perhaps not," said Lewis.

"Then what *is* he doin'? Ain't he a Huron?—answer me that. Does a Huron ever come south 'cept to burn, an' rob, an' murder? Good luck ef he don't git the chaine. I think his loping days are over. He's a varmint. Ye ken see that with half a look."

"He looks to me like a pretty good specimen of an Indian," said Lewis. "At any rate, speak to him, and tell me what he says."

Nat addressed some question to the savage, to which the other made no reply except a haughty stare. The ranger began to handle his knife viciously.

"Look here, you red beauty," said he, "I don't want to ask my questions twice over. What are ye doin' here?"

The savage made a sweeping gesture with his brown hand, taking in the expanse of woods and water about him.

"Whose land is this?" he said, in his own language. "Free land to Indian; free land to white man. One go where he please; other do same."

"Not a bit of it. A loping Huron ain't got the same rights that a white man or even an honest Injin, an' *they* are mighty few, hez got. Besides, you ain't after no good."

"White man always think harm of poor Indian," he said, in a tone which his haughty manner belied.

"Why were you watching us?"

"No come here to watch *you*," replied the Indian. "Watch some one else. You come; Barbed Arrow hide."

"That's his heathen name," said Nat. "They always have a name that means something. Now, that name makes me *sure* that he is a warrior, and is noted for his running. He's got a wild eye."

Nat spoke to his companions in his own tongue, which the Indian evidently did not understand.

"Barbed Arrow friend to white man," he said. "Always friend. White man think he lie in the bushes to hurt him. All wrong. Barbed Arrow's heart is soft. He loves his white brothers."

"As a butcher loves an ox," said Nat. "Bah! We know him well enough. What is the use of talkin'."

"Do you speak French?" asked Lewis, in that language. The face of the savage brightened, and he answered in the affirmative.

"Stand aside a moment, Nat," said Lewis. "Let me question him."

The ranger stood back, muttering invectives against the Huron nation in general, and the Barbed Arrow in particular.

"You see us here," said Lewis, mildly addressing the Indian, "in pursuit of some men who have burned a house and stolen from one of us. We do not wish to wrong anybody. But you must tell us why you are here."

"Barbed Arrow has lived in the world a long time," said he, "as long as my brother. He has gone away when he liked, and come back when he was ready. He has not stolen any thing from his white friends. He came for something else, something with which my brother has nothing to do."

"That will not satisfy us," said Lewis. "You were caught in the act of spying upon our actions. You speak the language of our enemies."

"Why does my brother speak it too?" said Barbed Arrow.

"I learned it when I was not an enemy to them."

"Suppose Barbed Arrow learn him then," was the reply.

Lewis saw that he had no common man to deal with, but a man whose intellect was acute by nature, and sharpened by contact with the French.

"My brother reasons well," said Lewis. "But he forgets that the Hurons have always been our enemies, and have done all they could to harm us. We meet a Huron and we say, this is a friend of the French. Is it not so?"

"Many of the Hurons love our father at Quebec," said Barbed Arrow, cautiously, "because he is always kind to them and gives them guns and powder, with which to take their food. Always kind. Indians always remember the hand that feeds them."

"Then you acknowledge that you are a friend of the French?"

"Sometimes; other times love Yengees. Yengees do right, Barbed Arrow glad. French do right, glad too. Barbed Arrow friend to everybody," he continued, with that sweeping gesture.

Lewis found himself in a quandary. In his desire to do right by everybody, he was at a loss what to do with the prize they had taken. He dared not let him go. He did not even dare to keep him. To kill him, professing friendship, would be a barbarity from which he shrunk. They might tie him and leave him in some secure place, but perhaps they should not return that way, or not return at all; in which case he would be doomed to a lingering death.

"What shall we do with him?" he said, turning to the men; "he claims to be a friend."

"*That* for his friendship," said Nat, snapping his fingers. "He lies. *Thar* ain't no Huron that doesn't hate us like death. He wouldn't be a Huron if he didn't."

"That does not help me to know what to do with the fellow."

Nat touched the hilt of his knife in a significant manner.

"I do not understand you."

"What do ye s'pose he would do with us, in the same place?"

"How can I tell?"

"I ken. He mout roast us at a slow fire if he had the time. They like that. I've known 'em to do it many a time. Mebbe, though, ef he was hurried, he'd put a knife into us, and lift our ha'r. That's the easiest way we would git off."

"That's no guide for us to go by."

"Ain't it? I think it is. Sars for the goose is sass for the gander. My advice is, drop him whar he is."

"What do you take me for? Do you suppose I would allow such a barbarous act?"

"What ye goin' to do then?" demanded Nat, in a tone of supreme indifference. "I'm sure I don't know any other way."

"I will not allow that."

"You ain't got all to say, said the other; I believe I took him myself, didn't I?"

"Never mind that," replied Lewis, hotly; "I will not allow him to be harmed."

"The deuce youwo n't," said Nat. "Then s'pose I say I'll do what I please about it."

"Be careful, Nat Hazard. I think you know me. I repeat that this man shall not be killed. It would sound well that eight men who have done so much for the colony murdered a man in cold blood because they did not know what to do with him."

"It's got to be did," said Nat.

"Very well," said Lewis. "There he is. Shoot him."

"Eh?"

"Shoot him."

Nat was taken aback by the permission granted so suddenly. He looked at Lewis, he looked at the Indian, cocking his rifle at the same time. Barbed Arrow folded his arms and looked the ranger full in the face. Once Nat raised his rifle, but lowered it again. It was only an Indian, to be sure, but it was hard to shoot a man whose eye never quailed.

"Why do you hesitate?" said Lewis. "Come; he is *yours*, you say. I agree that it is necessary that something should be done with him, and as you claim your right to murder him, do it."

"But—but—" began Nat.

"No words, sir. While we waste time here, those we are following will be on their way. Dispatch him as quickly as you can."

Nat raised his rifle again, the captain looking on coolly. As before, the face of Barbed Arrow did not change, but his lips opened and he began a monotonous chant, his death-song. He evidently did not expect to live, but the natural or acquired stoicism of the Indian came to his aid, and he was ready to meet death bravely. Nat dropped the rifle again.

"I don't see what right you have to put it off on me," he muttered.

"What? I thought you claimed it as a right."

"Ain't it?" said Nat, in a belligerent tone.

"Certainly. Do the work."

"That's just it. Ef you would only stand out agin' it an' say I shouldn't, I could give it to him *good*. But, thar ain't no opposition! You ain't got no right to ask *me* to kill him."

"*You* do it, Turner," said Lewis, turning to the settler. "I think you will claim the right, in retaliation for your own losses."

"Not I," said Turner. "I'm a rough sort of chap, but it would a'most seem like murder to kill that red; any way, I won't do it."

"*You* shoot him, Bates."

"Don't ask me. Do it yourself."

"I opposed it, you remember, and I could see by your faces that you sided with Nat in the matter. So, what could I do but give him his way? Now it seems he don't care to take what he claimed."

"You knew me, didn't you?" said Nat. "You knew I wouldn't do it, when it come to the p'int. I ain't that bad that I could do it. Where in thunder *kin* we put him anyhow?"

"I see no way but to bind him, and leave him here until we return," said Lewis.

"Umph! S'pose we don't come back?"

"I thought of that. But I think it would be best to risk it. There is no other way. I dare not set him at liberty."

During the conference, the Indian had not shifted his position except to turn his melancholy eyes upon the dark river

which ran at their feet. He never looked up after the ranger dropped the rifle, and not even when the captain interposed in his behalf. There was a furtive gleam in his eyes, however, and as the captain spoke last, he suddenly made a spring over the head of the astonished Nat and disappeared in the bushes. Nat grasped his rifle and started in pursuit. The bushes closed behind them before the others could fully comprehend the movements, and join in the chase. Half-a-dozen steps had buried the forms of the two foremost in a close thicket, behind which rose a series of limestone ridges, such as we find in that region at the present day. Into the passes between the ridges Barbed Arrow had gone, and when Nat entered after him, he was nowhere to be seen. Hazard claimed to be a man of easy temper, but he certainly did not show this when he returned from his unsuccessful chase. He was mad with himself for not shooting the Indian, and with the captain for not opposing him in the act.

"Nat," said the captain, "do you wish to retain my regard?"

"I don't mind it. I s'pose I can bear it. 'Tain't many that would," replied Nat, who was inclined to be savage.

"Just so. Then you know if you had killed that Indian our relationship would have been at an end forever. I would not have allowed a man to speak to me who was capable of such an act. I knew you better than to believe you could be that man."

"Did know me, eh? Well, I am glad you think so. But I'd 'a killed him if I'd thought he was goin' to get away, cuss him."

"How did you lose him?"

"Darned ef I know. He crawled into some hole. Even ef he didn't he can run away from anybody here. The powder was out of the pan of my rifle or his cake would have been dough. I sighted him fair in the middle of the back, but he got away. It flashed in the pan, lucky for him it did. He is a lost red-skin, but I'll have him yet, before I'm a year older."

"Do you think he belongs to this gang who burned out Turner?"

"Of course."

"He denied it."

"Why wouldn't he, when you told him that you were after them marauders? He'd be a bigger fool than I think he is, ef he didn't lie about it. And then, Lordy, he's an Injin! Didn't I tell you an Injin lies for the fun of the thing, or because it's meat and drink to him?"

"If I believed he was one of those, I should repent having saved him," said Lewis. "But I believe he told the truth."

"What made him run away?"

"You forget that you had been pointing your rifle at his breast and threatening his life. Under the circumstances, I do not wonder that he ran away. I should have done the same."

"The upshot will be, that he will make the hills too hot to hold us. We may as well get out of this now, while times are good. I'd like to find the female that worked that moccasin. It's about the neatest little foot I've seen in a good bit of time."

"So should I. Do you think it can be an Indian woman?"

"Must be. What white woman do you s'pose is up here? The panthers would hev had a white woman before she had gone two mile. 'Sides, she's a Huron. That's plain enough."

"How do you know it?"

"Oh, look at the moccasin. Don't you see it's Huron make? Thar's ez much difference between the make of a moccasin in the tribes ez thar is in their canoes. Shall we take the back track?"

"What did we come out for?"

"Fur the varmints, to be sure! I'm with you. Go whar you will, I doubt ef ye find a place whar Mohawk Nat won't dare to foller."

CHAPTER III.

A SCOUT.

THE party went forward slowly, upon the trail of the Indians, who had grown bold, regardless of pursuit, evidently thinking they had thrown their pursuers off the track. At one place they had stopped, caught some fish and cooked them. The manner in which the fire was built made Nat certain that the Indians were of the Huron nation. Every tribe has its own mode, even of building a fire. Some tribes place the ends of the sticks in the blaze, and push them up as they burn. Others make the fire in the center of the pile. So Nat said as he showed them the manner in which the logs were laid, and dilated on the different styles common among the tribes.

"Now I'll tell you what to do," said he. "'Tain't no use for the hull b'ilin' of us to go blundering along on this trail like a pack of sheep. You chaps must get kiver som'er's hereabout, an' I'll go forward alone. I'll find out whar they ar', an' what our chances ar', an' come back to you. That's the best thing I kin do for you."

"Agreed," said the captain. "Your plan is a good one. The whole party need not go forward, for, in my opinion, we are not far from the reds. What do you think, Mohawk?"

"They ain't a mile away," replied Nat, concisely. "Not a mile in all. I'll engage to bring some sort of word in an hour. An' ef I don't, ye may make up yer minds Nat Hazard has gone to sleep, an' take your course which way ye think best."

"Let me do this dangerous work," said the captain. "It is my right."

"I don't see how ye ken go to work an' prove it," said Nat, with a comical twist of the mouth. "I claim to be the original discoverer of the *project*, and, as sech, I don't give up to no one. 'Sides, ain't ye captain? Who is goin' to lead the men in case you go under? Get out with your nonsense."

"Have your own way. I meant to take upon myself the danger of the enterprise. There is some honor in it, too."

"Bt thar is. I likes to scout. It is my trade. Do you s'pose I mean to give up my place to any man in the rangers? Not while my name is Mohawk Hazard. I'm the man that knows the region about these yer rivers better than any other man in the section. Stands to reason I should. I've traveled it, man an' boy, for nigh on to twenty-seven years. An' if any one has a better right to know the kentry, let him jump up an' show hisself, an' I'm the man to go under. Whoop!"

"Be careful, Nat. You will be heard."

"Heered! Thar ain't nobody nigh us now. Oh, I'm a roarer, I am! I consider myself nothin' more nor less than a buster. I'm the great living catamount of the Adirondacks; the hoss that likes Injin-fightin' better than eatin'. I'm a hull team, I am. Who says I ain't? Let him flop his wings and crow out his name! It's got to be a good one to beat mine."

"Everybody knows that, Nat. But, where shall we camp?"

"Foller me," replied the ranger.

They followed him in silence. He turned away from the river and entered a sort of *cul de sac* in the hills, of perhaps a hundred yards across, barred in on every side by lofty forest-trees. In this place he left them.

"You keep quiet here," he said, "an' when you hear the sound of the mocking-bird whistling like a man, an' then crying like a hawk, you ken know I'm around. Don't wait over an hour. At the end of that time my cake will be cooked, ef I ain't here. Don't build no fires."

He left them with the cautious, silent step so requisite in a good woodman. Ten minutes after, he was following a fresh trail, almost traveling by the scent. He was a man born and bred in the forest. His cradle was formed of birchen bark, and it swung before the door of a wildwood cabin, near which the deer bounded. He had learned his lessons from the swaying bough. Each broken twig, a bent leaf, a knot of moss brushed from the trunk of a tree—all these had a language which none could read better than he. His

eye was quick when glancing over the double sights, and woe to the man or beast at whom he pulled trigger. Rarely did he shoot in vain. The idle, useless air which he ordinarily assumed was a sort of safeguard. Few men could conceive how such a person could be so terrible as an enemy. Yet, known and feared through the whole colony, by French and Indians, as a man of unfathomable resources, whom no one could outwit, whose foot was tireless on the trail, and whose strength was wonderful, Mohawk Nat commanded the respect which all classes ever yield to courage and ability.

As the trail freshened he seemed to expand and to become more eager. Danger, to him, was a pastime. He reveled in it, and pricked up his ears like an old hound the nearer it came. Certain that not many rods could intervene between himself and the savages, his steps became more and more cautious; he literally felt his way over the path; no stick cracked under his feet; no leaves rustled as he walked. The path led him close to the bank of the stream; he could see the dark water gleaming through the trees in front, and was satisfied that those he sought were camped upon the open space he knew so well, between the river and the bluff. Leaving the trail he struck out toward the bluffs, which lined the stream on the either side. Up the steep he strained, and at length reached the summit. A screen of low bushes grew along the edge of the bluff, and parting these cautiously, the scout looked down upon a strangely picturesque scene.

At this point the stream was broken into cascades, gleaming in the sunshine, and plunging down the rocks in wild confusion. The spot where he lay was just at the head of the cascades; the whole beautiful scene lay like a panoramic view before his eyes. He was too old a trailer not to love such sights; but, it was not upon the scenery his glance now rested.

About fifteen feet below him, on a shelf of limestone perhaps twenty feet in width, and extending for twenty rods along the stream, sat a number of Hurons, conversing in suppressed voices. They were in their war-paint, and some of them wore upon their persons articles which he recognized as among those taken from Tom Turner's house. They were seven in number, but none of them chiefs. From this, the ranger was convinced that all the party were not present.

He was satisfied that they would not be so far from their villages without a leader, either white or red.

"I'd like to extarminate the hull individdle lot of em," muttered Nat. "But, I'm jubous thar's more in the back-ground."

He made a movement on the rock, and some of the loose stone slid slowly down, rattling over the rocks. The savages looked up; but, as good luck would have it, at the same moment a large bird rose from the bushes near by and flew away.

"Ugh," said one of the Hurons, whose language their white foe perfectly understood. "Bird do it."

"Where is Le Renard?" demanded another. "He promised to come here, some time since. Why does he stay away?"

"Le Renard is very brave," said the one who had first spoken. "He does much for poor Indian. He promised not to let Barbed Arrow hurt us, when he comes. Barbed Arrow is very mad."

"Barbed Arrow strikes quick, when he is mad."

"Le Renard says," replied the other, "that we shall be safe. Got blankets, got rings, got cloth; all from Yengees." The savage smiled hideously.

"Barbed Arrow wants to be friends with Yengees, and friends with Frenchman. But Hurons must have *some* enemy, else no scalps."

"Hurons got no scalps, this time," answered the other Indian. "Plenty of other things, but no scalp. Must have scalp, *somehow*, before we recross the mountain."

"You won't have a sculp of your own long," thought Nat. "Oh, you beauty! Ain't you handsome? I never did see sech a sweet youth, and to think that sech a pooty child couldn't get a sculp. Dear me!"

"Some time we shall find Long Arm, I hope," said another of the Indians, using a name by which the scout was known to them. "He is out on the trail. He is great warrior; his scalp worth much. He is Hurons' worst enemy; it will be much honor to raise his hair."

At this moment a perfect deluge of the shale stone rattled down the bluff and the party sprung to their feet. No small animal could have caused the stone to fall in such quantity,

and they began to look about them for a place to climb the bluff. This Nat determined to prevent, and quickly gathering a quantity of loose stones, he piled them up on the edge of the bluff, keeping out of sight. Then he lay down close to the verge, with a stone in each hand and waited. Soon a head, covered by long black hair, with a single feather over each ear, rose slowly into view. As it did so, the long arm of the scout was raised and fell with crushing force upon the head of the Indian. The skull actually cracked under the force of the blow, and the savage rolled back upon the platform, alighting on his head and shoulders with a loud thump.

"Poor feller," muttered Nat. "Fell down, I guess. Now ain't that too bad!"

The blow had come so suddenly that the Indians below really did not know what had caused the fall. Waiting half a minute another head came in sight. This was the man who had expressed so strong a desire for the scalp of Long Arm. Again that powerful hand swept like a flash through the air, falling with sickening force upon the head bent closely down to the earth in the effort to crawl over the sharp facial line of the cliff. The body disappeared, and a dull thud announced the blow's result. In falling, the Huron struck upon the half-resuscitated body of the savage who had preceded him, almost driving the little breath that was left in him out of his carcass.

"Ugh!" grunted the man who fell first. "Dead now; got no breath!"

"Think some one up on rock," said the last victim, looking up. "Somet'ing hit you on head, eh?"

"Head broke in two, five, seven pieces! All gone," said the other, groaning.

The rest of the gang began to realize that there was danger in ascending the cliff. Those who had climbed half-way up retreated in a very precipitate manner, casting looks of comical dismay at the precipice, from which they feared a new descent of stones. Nor were they disappointed. Rocks began to rattle about their ears, and they betook themselves to the nooks and crannies of the bluff, from which they peeped out and meditated their plan of attack.

"You got it that time, you bloody skunks," muttered Nat.

"They didn't jedge rightly of the sort of chicken that roosted up here. I'm game; it takes *men* to cut my comb, an' a chap must look out or he will get spurred in the eye. Whoop! Injin? Who cares for Injins? I'm ekal to every individdle tribe from here to Loosanner. I know it."

The Indians, recovering from their first alarm, grew ashamed of their fears. Springing up, they began to climb the bluff at many different points, to which it was impossible for the ranger to attend at once.

"This is gittin' interestin'," he said, "blame my cats ef it ain't. I'm in for a fight unless I run. Guess, on the hull, I'll *run*."

He girded up his loins and started, just as the Indians left the base of the cliff. He knew that it would take three or four minutes for them to gain the top, and he made good use of his time. There was not a better runner in that section. As he sped along, over the ground he knew so well, he heard the yell of the first savage who gained the top of the bluff, and it spurred him to greater speed. Under most circumstances, he would have taken greater heed of the path before him; but, thinking that all the danger was from behind, he was only conscious that some heavy object fell upon his head; myriads of stars flashed before his eyes; then all was dark.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WARNING AND THE ABANDONMENT.

LEWIS and his men lay quietly in their lurking-place for half an hour; the young leader began to chafe for the return of the scout. He blamed himself for allowing the brave fellow to go alone upon such a perilous mission, when the woods were full of savages, hungry for scalps. The men saw the young captain's mood, and none of them were hardy enough to intrude upon it. He walked up and down, chafing like a baited bear, eager for the hour to elapse, so that he could go in pursuit of his friend. In this frame of mind he was aroused by hearing the man posted at the entrance to the ravine say:

"Halt there!"

He went quickly to the guard and found him opposing the entrance of an Indian girl, who was as manifestly determined to proceed. At the first glance, Lewis was forced to acknowledge that she was a royal creature. Forest training had given her a grace of step and motion which the etiquette of courts and cities never can teach a woman. Her form was gracefully tall and finely molded. Her feet were shod in dainty moccasins. A dress of buckskin worked with beads reached just to the knee. Her limbs were clad in loose leggings worked like the dress. A belt of beautiful material, which evidently was not worked in an Indian village, encircled her waist, and in it a small dagger and a pair of silver-mounted pistols showed themselves. Her face was not that of an Indian of pure blood. Indeed, a single glance showed that she took her beauty from white blood. The hair, which flowed to her waist, was brown, and waved like the sea.

She was pushing back the guard with the barrel of a small carbine, of French make, having no fear of him. Lewis, surprised at this vision of beauty, did not speak.

"Why stop?" demanded the girl, in broken English. "Go away, man, I will speak with capitaine."

A certain pretty way she had of accenting the latter word showed that she understood French. Lewis addressed her in that tongue.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "I did not know that the forest held so beautiful a woman. Where do you come from and what do you want?"

"Too many question," replied the girl, with a musical laugh. "Ask again. One at a time."

"Who are you?"

"I am called among the Hurons Minetah-mara, 'the Swaying Reed.' I am the daughter of a Huron chief."

"Why are you here?"

"Ask the wind why it comes and goes. The Swaying Reed has no one who dare control her steps. When she wishes to go, she will. There is no one to stay her course."

"But you are a woman, and you are alone in the great forest. A thousand dangers lurk in your path. The panther lies hid under the bough. The rattlesnake crawls through the

glen. The bear looks out of the cover. Men with arms in their hands roam up and down, seeking for scalps. It is no place for women."

"It is no place for the children of the pale-faces," replied the girl, erecting her proud head; "but, for a daughter of a Huron, who does not know what it is to fear, there is no danger. White women! I have seen them at Quebec and at Montreal. What are they? Weak things, whom their husbands care for like little birds. They do nothing but open their mouths for the bread which the men must bring them. They are not like the women of the Hurons."

"No. White men do not think that women should work. They are not strong enough for it."

"White men are kind to their women. They think of nothing so much as to keep them safe from harm. An Indian would not do so, but the white man is right. But the Swaying Reed is not here without an object. You ask me why I come? Why do *you* come to the woods?"

"We follow some men who burned a house and robbed it."

"Were they Indians?"

"Yes."

"Were they Hurons?"

"We think so."

"Are these all your men?"

"All but one," replied Miller.

"You have not enough. Your enemy is stronger. Before you go forward, think upon what you do. An enemy lies in your path, having ten times your numbers. Others are coming. You are in greater danger than you think. Return to the great wigwam. Even there you may not be safe."

"Why do you tell me this?"

"To save you."

"Are you not a Huron?"

"Not all Huron. The blood that makes this cheek whiter than the other Huron maidens is white-man's blood. That blood is strongest to day and it will not let me see you destroyed, as you will be if you stay. Turn back, therefore, and return to the town in haste."

"I can not."

"Listen," said the girl. "Why be stubborn? Blood will flow. I do not come here to make talk because I like to hear it. I come here to save you if I can. Hurons are on war-path. Chief is very mad. You must go back or perish, every one of you."

"Who is the chief?"

"He is a Huron," replied the Swaying Reed. "He is a brave. He is very brave. He is young; he is strong; many scalps have hung in his girdle. He has struck the Mohawks, the Delawares, and the tall Onondagas. He is a very cunning man. But the Swaying Reed does not care for him," she added, rather haughtily, as if some personal dislike moved her.

"What is his name?"

"Barbed Arrow; so he is called among the Hurons. The French name him the Moose, because he is so strong. He is very brave."

"Do you hear that, boys?" said Lewis, turning to the men. "That Barbed Arrow is the head-chief of the Hurons."

"You don't say!" said Tom Turner. "Don't you think we had better get away from here, then? The cuss knows all about us, and we'll be chewed up in no time."

"You would not go until we find Nat, would you?" said the captain.

No answer followed.

"Yes, go back—go back—that's good," chimed in the girl.

A frown flitted over the captain's face. The undisguised anxiety of his men to return on their track, annoyed and pained him.

"I, at least, will *not* go back until I know that he is dead, or safe. You may do as you please."

"If he is gone under," said Turner, "I don't see no use for the rest of us to foller him. No sense in that. And what are we seven to a whole pack of the devils, crazy for our blood, no doubt, since we treated Barbed Arrow to Nat's claws."

"You take counsel of your fears, Turner. Your heart is weak and your sense of honor not too keen. You may run away, but I never will desert Nat Hazard. I was wrong to let him go alone. I might have known that he would get

himself into some scrape. He always manages to do that. But, let me finish my talk with the girl."

"Seems to take you a good while," grumbled Turner, uneasily casting his eyes to the rear, as if to choose his path of retreat. "Lucky for you we don't know French, and she does. You always get the best of every thing, one way or t'other; but then, you're the capt'in."

"Tell me plainly," said Lewis, again turning to the girl, "what are the intentions of the enemy?"

"Not *my* enemy, *your* enemy," she replied. "The Hurons are always good to Swaying Reed. Only to-day my white blood is strongest. To-morrow I shall be *all* Huron, perhaps!"

"But, tell me what they mean to do; where are they bound to?"

"I never tell. You go 'way, now, straight, no stay here another minute. If you stay, your scalp is sure to be lifted," making a most significant sign, which all the men only too well understood. "Huron like scalp too much."

Lewis noticed that when excited, she spoke in broken English, seeming to prefer it to the French.

"Where did you learn English?"

"Never mind. Learn him one day very good. Now you listen! Go home *quick*! No ask much questions. No want you hurt; no want Huron hurt; no want French hurt; all good. Go 'way, white man!"

This individual philanthropy did not suit the young captain.

"Yes. But how can I avoid danger when I don't know what it is?"

"If stay here, *lose scalp*," replied the girl, angrily. "Why not understand? Huron come, got no scalp, take yours. Got *good* scalp, tell *you*! Huron like good scalp—warrior scalp."

"Swaying Reed," said Lewis, "suppose you were a warrior and had come out as I have, on the war-path. Suppose one of your men had gone away, and you had promised if he did not come back in an hour, to look for him; then that you were in danger from Indians as I am, and your warrior not yet come in. What would you do, in such a case?"

"Your warrior gone?" demanded Swaying Reed, turning pale.

"Yes."

"You promise to look for him?"

"Faithfully," replied Miller.

"White man very brave. Swaying Reed much sorry. Hope white warrior come back soon. Good-by, chief."

She turned to go, but Lewis stopped her—why, he did not know. She turned her lustrous eyes upon him, but, meeting his burning gaze, her bright orbs sunk to the ground.

"You are going away," he said, "I shall never see you again. I have something of yours to keep. You do not know what it is."

She looked at him in surprise. He held up the tiny moccasin. She blushed, and looked down.

"The warrior speaks true. I shall see him no more. But what will he do with the moccasin?"

"Keep it always, in memory of this hour. And you must wear something of mine."

He took a ring from his little finger and put it on the middle one of her right hand. She allowed him to do it, stealing a furtive glance at his sad face as she did so. Then, snatching away her hand and uttering another "good-by," she darted into the forest. At the same moment the yells of savage voices broke upon their ears, coming from the direction of the falls. It was the moment when Nat set out upon his desperate race. Five minutes passed, and the voices were still. Shortly after, they broke out again, apparently full of joy.

"That means something," said Lewis. "The fellows are rejoicing over some feat on their part. Perhaps they have circumvented poor Nat. However that may be, it is time for us to be on the move."

"Which way, captain?" asked Turner.

"To look for Nat, of course," he replied.

"Not any for me," said Turner. "'Tain't no use. We only git into danger ourselves and don't help him. Seven agin' a hundred is a leetle too small a crowd fur a scrimmage."

"Then you refuse to go?"

"I won't go a step, except toward home; and the sooner we go the better that's all."

"What do you say, Bates?"

"I say as Tom does: back out of this in no time, and let Nat take keer of himself, as he is able to do."

"Are you together in this? Then go, in God's name. I want no such men with me. Do you remember what Nat Hazard has done for you? First, Tom Turner, he saved your life when a Mohawk had mounted you and was whipping off your scalp. You, Gideon Bates, have to thank him for a like service. It is a pity he held back the Frenchman's arm. And there is not a man here to whom he has not done some great service. I acknowledge *my* obligations, and I will do what I can to aid him."

"He's gone under, cap., that's plain enough, I should think. Didn't ye hear the yells? That meant thet some one hed gone under. Come, cap., make up yer mind to let poor Nat go, 'live or dead; you ken do nothing for him now; we must look out for our own safety. We've got fam'lies to support, an' can't afford to lose our sculps," said Turner.

"I said *go*, did I not? Why do you hesitate? Go, the pack of you; and let me see as little of you as I can in future."

"That need not trouble you," said Bates. "You won't see none of us no more, 'cause they'll have your scalp before the day is over."

"Don't waste any time," retorted Lewis, angrily. "I have work to do. Be off; and when you go back to Schenectady, tell them that you left me among the hills in the north woods, and that I said I would not return unless I brought Nat Hazard with me. It will be a good thing to tell, that the pack of you left me to my fate. Away!"

"You are hard on us, capt'in," said Tom Turner, beginning to show signs of anger. "Don't carry it too fur. We ain't so much to blame 'cause we don't want to lose our sculps."

"Then why do you wait?"

"We want you to go back too."

"And you think," said the captain, erecting his head proudly, "because a pack of cowards sneak away from danger, that I will countenance them in it by going too?"

"Cowards!" cried two or three of the men at once.

"Did you say *coward*, capt'in?" cried Turner, his fierce eyes gleaming. "'Cause ef ye did, it mout make a querrel."

"I said it plainly enough," replied Lewis, bringing his rifle to a level with his breast. "Do you understand it? Do you threaten? If you do, you know how to settle it. I am ready for you. All you have to do is to step out yonder with your rifle, and when Bates gives the word, fire."

"I fight no duel with you," said Gideon Bates, "and help fight no duels. Neither shall Tom Turner. It's a good thing for you, a man that can hit the bull's-eye at six hundred, to talk of fighting a common man. We'll find a way to make that word coward bitter to you."

"Be off!"

"Don't hurry us," said Bates. "Are you foolhardy enough not to see that you are trying to drive seven men, any one of them a tough out-and-outer? Be civil. We are going now."

They fell into line and began to march. As the party passed out of the defile, Gideon Bates looked back at the captain.

"Forgit all we've said, capt'in. Come with us."

"Go to the devil!"

"Thank you!"

And so they parted. He watched them in gloomy silence as they passed away by the side of the dark river, trying to make out the mystery which puzzled him, that these men, whom he thought he had proved in many an hour of peril, should turn recreant at that moment and leave him to his fate.

However, it was done. Whatever work was to be performed, he was the man to do it. If Mohawk Nat was to be saved, Lewis was the man who must save him.

CHAPTER V.

BLACKWING, THE ONEIDA.

LEWIS was trained to adventure, and was not a man to shrink from danger, even though unexpectedly forced to face it alone. The desertion of his companions, while it annoyed him and disconcerted his plans somewhat, did not appall him. Upon a second view, it seemed to him that he could do more for his companion alone than the whole party could have done.

His plan was to find out first the position and number of his foes, and whether Nat was really in their power; then to release him by cunning, since force could be of no avail. The cries which he had heard served to show the direction in which he might expect to find the band, and he set out on his perilous task. Experience taught him that a dangerous path is rarely sought by men in ordinary travel, and the more difficult the path he took the less likely he was to fall in with the savages before he was ready to meet them. Like Nat, he knew the ground well, and not the savages themselves were his equals in forest craft.

The river at that point, and for miles to the south and east, flowed between high limestone ledges, towering grandly on either side. But, along the face of the bluffs, on the northern side, ran a narrow shelf, wide enough, however, for a man to pass safely, with ordinary care, at most points. But now and then a place could be found where a misstep would be death. The body of the adventurer would fall fifty feet upon the jagged rocks below, and once there, it was simply impossible to climb the perpendicular wall rising high above. No one knew the risks incurred better than Lewis, but he determined to encounter them. Lowering himself upon the ledge with great care, he went forward stooping, his hands always ready to grasp the projections of the rocks, to save himself if he stumbled. Above his head hung the stone bluff; below him ran the dark river - while up the stream he caught the gleam

of the first cascade, which fell from a height of forty feet. It was a strange scene, but one he loved from long association.

Artists who make pictures of the scenery now would find them lacking in something which lent a savage grandeur to the sight then—the lofty pines which grew along the banks, which had stood there years upon years. The path was littered here and there by fragments of limestone, which had fallen from the cliff above. Even as he walked, a huge mass, which had been threatening to break away for many years, the last support yielding to the wash of the water, came thundering down, striking the ledge not five feet in front of the adventurous young man. He threw himself quickly backward, just in time to escape the pieces which flew through the air, like fragments from a bursting bomb. But, the mischief did not end with that. To his horror, a portion of the ledge upon which the great rock, weighing over twenty tons, fell, gave way before the force of the blow, and a great gap showed itself before the eyes of Lewis, perhaps fifteen feet in width, and even the portion on which he stood showed a great rent, which threatened to widen if any additional weight was thrown upon it. He crawled cautiously to the opening and looked down. The ledge at that spot had been very thin, and he could not tell whether the portion on the other side would bear his weight in case he made the leap.

There was only a choice of two things: to go back and undertake the open path through the woods, or leap the chasm. Quick to decide, he made up his mind to attempt the latter desperate feat. Retiring five paces, to give himself impetus in the leap, he went at it like a stag. For a moment his body quivered in the air, and the next struck the rock on the other side. As he had feared, it gave way, and he felt himself going down. Throwing out his hands, he clutched a strong vine which dangled over the face of the cliff, and held on desperately, while the frail support under foot went crashing downward into the gulf below. He found himself hanging at the utmost extent of his arms, struggling vainly to find a resting-place for his feet. The vine was that of the wild grape, and as strong as steel wire, and he began to go up it, hand over hand, feeling at every step for some projection on which to rest.

At last his foot struck a friendly knob of the stony wall, and he drew a deep breath of relief as he felt the weight on his arms grow less. He flattened his body against the rock and looked about him. He was still in the greatest danger. His weight had broken off five feet more of the ledge, and so smoothly that there was little chance of crossing it successfully. He looked upward. The vine by which he hung swayed loosely over the face of the cliff, and did not touch it at any place except on the crest. In an instant he bethought himself of a plan.

Placing his feet firmly against the small projection on which they rested, which, luckily, was somewhat above the level of the ledge, he gave a desperate kick, and swung back over the ledge he had just quitted. As he came back, he struck the projection again and swung outward with redoubled force. This time, as he crossed the face of the cliff, he let go his hold, and found himself lying on his back, safe, on the other side of the gulf.

During the desperate struggle, he had not allowed himself to think of the great danger he had run; but now, when it was over, he could not repress a shudder as he saw what a desperate undertaking he had accomplished. Full of devout thanksgiving for his escape from imminent danger he went on his way, knowing that he had other difficulties to surmount, but encouraged by the hope that a man who had gone safely through such danger, could overcome all else.

The path narrowed for some hundred yards, and he was continually on the alert, lest a false step should precipitate him into the turbulent waters underfoot. With one hand and knee upon the ledge, and the other upon the face of the cliff, he pressed forward very slowly, never looking down, lest he should become giddy. As he rounded a point of rock, he came to a platform, perhaps twenty feet in width. There he sat down to rest and prepare his arms for use. His rifle he had hidden in the glen where his comrades had deserted him. The only arms he had retained were his knife and pistols. The latter he now reprimed with great care, and replaced them in his belt. He was just rising to pursue his course, when a man came suddenly round the point of rock in front, meeting him face to face.

It was an Indian in his war-paint !

To act suddenly in a case like this was a part of the training of the young forester. Making a cat-like leap, he seized the savage by the waist, and tripping up his heels, fell heavily upon him. But, strong as Lewis was, he found that he had no mean enemy in the athletic red-skin in his grasp. One thing surprised him. The savage had uttered no cry, though startled by the sudden onset. They rolled over and over together on the hard rock, grappling at each other's throats. But, the great personal strength of the young captain made him more than a match for the Indian. Struggling desperately, he managed to get first one arm and then the other of his savage foe, under his knees. With his adversary thus, he was able to draw his knife, and place it at the throat of the helpless man. As he did so, he was struck by the Indian's bold demeanor. His face never changed, even while the keen point of the knife touched his throat. The young forester had a chivalrous nature, and it went against his inclinations to kill a person who would make no plea for mercy.

The red-man was a strong-limbed, active-looking fellow nearly as tall as his conqueror, and clad after the manner of the northern tribes. But, in the struggle his hunting-shirt had been torn open and Lewis saw the insignia of the Oneidas blazing on his breast.

"Ha !" he cried, "you are not a son of the Hurons. Speak."

"Blackwing is an Oneida. Why should he fear to say it?" replied the warrior. "Let the white man strike. He can say he has taken the scalp of a great brave."

Lewis rose at once and assisted the warrior to rise.

"Why is this?" demanded Blackwing.

"Are not the Oneidas the friends of the Yengees?"

"Is my white brother a Yengee? I thought he came from the north. Then we are friends?"

"Yes."

"My brother is very strong," said Blackwing, touching the muscular arms of his late adversary. "He is strong as the ox. Few dare meet Blackwing when he is angry. But the white man is stronger than he."

"Why is the Blackwing here? The villages of the Oneidas are far to the west."

"The Oneidas stray far away sometimes. They hate the Hurons, and a little bird sung in my ears that they would soon be on the war-path. Blackwing found his hatchet and his knife, and came here to take scalps. The Indian is never so happy as when a scalp hangs at his belt."

"Then you knew that these Hurons would be here?"

"My brother is right."

"It's lucky I saw the totem of the Oneidas on your breast," said Lewis. "I believe I should have been forced to kill you, in self-defense. I did not understand why you did not cry out while we fought."

"Hurons dere," replied Blackwing, pointing toward the falls.

"Ah-ha! Did you see them? How many are there?"

"Too much," replied Blackwing, falling into broken English. "Many times much. Chief very mad. Some warriors go las' night, burn house, an' no ask chief. Barbed Arrow much mad."

"Barbed Arrow! Is he there?"

"Chief, tell you. French like him too much. Good many time he take Oneida scalp. Blackwing take him scalp some day. Hang it on pole. Take him to Oneida village. Every one glad."

"Are there any white men among them?"

"Two," said Blackwing.

"Do you know them?"

"Yes. One man there, call Le Renard. Very strong. Good many time take Yengee scalp."

"Do you know his name among the French?"

"Too much forgit," replied the Indian. "'Member some day. He come among Hurons, talk, talk, talk; den Hurons go on war-path. Always do dat, when Le Renard come."

"I suppose by the name he is crafty as the fox."

"Too much. Snake in the grass. One time he come to Oneida castle and bring French belts for chiefs. Talk all day against Yengees. Say they got Indian ground. Make some warrior very mad. Yengees *have* got Indian ground, too. But, what make difference? Yengee want him; French want him; al. same. Rather give him to Yengee than French. Like him better."

Lewis smiled at the *naïve* philosophy of the Indian, while he could not help acknowledging that the Yengees had indeed "got the Indian land."

"Did you see any prisoners among the Indians?" asked he.

"One," said Blackwing.

"What was he doing?"

"Tied; tied fast; tied —— fast," replied Blackwing, who had learned to swear from his white compatriots. "Know him; Mohawk Nat him name."

"Good!" said Lewis. "So he is not killed. I am here to save him."

"Want help, eh?"

"Will you help me?"

"Yes. Much like Nat. Help me one day when fight panther. Save him, ef can."

"Thank you. As you know the way, lead me back, and we will see what can be done."

"Not go back now. Too much Indian. Bimeby go 'way. Den we go."

"What shall we do then?"

"Sit here. One go scout. Den come back when Indian go 'way."

"Who shall go?" demanded the young captain.

"No care. If say Blackwing go, all right. If go self, all same."

"Then I will go," said Lewis. "Is there any place to hide here in case the Indians pursue me?"

"Good place," said Blackwing. "See?"

He took him to a spot where a large, loose stone lay against the side of the cliff. Pushing it with his hand it swung easily to one side, and revealed a cavity large enough to hold one or two persons. Into this cavity he got, and from within rolled the large stone into its place, completely concealing himself from the view of any intruder.

"Good, eh?"

"First rate. You'd better stay there. I will go and scout."

He had already passed over the most difficult portion of the path, and was approaching the second cascade, at the bottom of which the Indians were lying. Creeping forward with great care, he soon heard voices, and looking through

crevice in the rocks, he could see the speakers. At least a hundred Indians were on the platform, seated in various positions, conversing in short, terse sentences. Not far from the place where he lay hidden, a group of these attracted the attention of the forester. One of these was Barbed Arrow, one a Jesuit priest, and the third a Frenchman of remarkable appearance. He was very large-framed, and apparently possessed great muscular strength. His dress was gaudy, bedizened here and there with gold and silver lace and richly embroidered. He wore heavy boots, reaching to the knee. His face was reddened by exposure to the sun and the influence of old wine, of which he was a great lover. His nose was hooked, like the claw of a vulture, giving his face the expression of a beast of prey. In his weapons, as in his dress, he was inclined to foppishness, for every article was heavily inlaid with the precious metals, and in the hilt of his dagger blazed a diamond of great value. This was one of the most active partisans in the French service—a man of low birth, whose instincts were bloody, and who was a tool of the Jesuits because he was one of their order—a man who would not turn aside for any such petty obstacle as a human life, if it lay in the way of his plans.

“And so these fellows went on an expedition without consulting you?” he said, looking at Barbed Arrow. “Did not the fools know that they were exposing the whole enterprise, and that it might fail?”

“What do they know?” said the chief. “They are stones; they are lumps of earth. They did not so much as bring home a single scalp. I will go to Gah-na-too, who was the fool to do this without speaking to me, and kill him with my hatchet.”

“No, no, chief; none of that. We can not afford to lose a man. And though Gah-na-too is a stupid blockhead, he is a good warrior when it comes to fighting; and it will come to that soon. The enemies of France shall be humbled in the dust.”

“It is just that such should be the case, my son,” said the older Jesuit, a crafty smile lighting up his face. “What if they are slain? The blood of a hundred heretics is nothing to advancing the banner of the true faith.”

"True, father," said the Frenchman. "They little dream that I am so near them in their towns. I have learned them how to fear me; and before I return to Montreal I will give them cause to remember the name I bear."

"They know it now," said the elder Jesuit. "Think what a glorious work you are doing—you, who are upholding the cause of the true church and a Christian king. You have cause to be proud."

"Thanks, father," said the fanatic. "I will have greater cause for pride. But, now I think of it, Barbed Arrow, you were in danger from these fellows who came to hunt for our runaway warriors."

"They took me and would have slain me; but the strong young chief saved me."

"How?"

Barbed Arrow related his adventure by the river, and the escape he had been enabled to make.

"Then this fellow we took to-day is the one who threatened you?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean to do with him?"

"I will teach him what it is to insult a great chief of the Hurons. He shall repent it when he is in the fire."

"You don't mean to try *that*?"

"Why not?"

"Suit yourself; only I'd rather not be around when it is done. Give me word when the time comes, and I will be off."

"My brother will know in time. As for this Yengee with the white head, I have no pity for him; he is a dog."

The countenance of the young chief was distorted by anger, and he cast an angry glance toward a small pine which grew out of a fissure of the rock a few feet away. Following the direction of his glance, Lewis saw the object of his search, Mohawk Nat, bound to the tree, and whistling as unconcernedly as he might have done beside his camp-fire.

Watching his bound comrade, Lewis could not help admiring his bearing, cool and self-possessed as if no danger threatened. All the while, however, Nat's keen eyes took in every motion of his captors, and his friend could see that any

opportunity for escape would be eagerly seized. But, how was it possible, in broad daylight, to get him away, watched as he was? Lewis could but acknowledge that any open, or even covert attempt would be foolhardy in the extreme. Still he had set out to rescue his follower, and was determined to succeed, even at the risk of the loss of life or liberty. The large Frenchman was looking at Nat in any thing but a good-natured manner.

"Tell some of those fellows to untie that man and bring him here."

"What will you do with him, my son?" demanded the Jesuit.

"I wish to question him. Perhaps," he added, in a lower tone of voice, which only the Jesuit heard, "I may be able to win him to our side. If I do, I shall claim him myself."

"Do you think he may be so won?"

"Who can tell? Parbleu! It is not such a dreadful thing to serve the king of France, I should say."

"It is an honor, my son. But, of all obstinate people I ever met, these English colonists are the worst. I find them far harder to deal with than the pure-blooded Englishman. If they should ever rebel against the mother country, they would have one successful quality—they would never allow themselves beaten. Defeated at one point, they would appear at another."

"I hope they may rebel," said the other, laughing. "But here is my man. With your permission I will talk to him alone."

CHAPTER VI.

TEMPTED.

ALTHOUGH the limbs of Nat Hazard were freed, and the savages had retired to some distance from the platform on which Le Renard stood, they did not give up their watchfulness. Many of them held their weapons ready, to guard against any attempt to escape. A single glance warned the

woodman of this, and he knew the absurdity of an attempt which could only expose him to death. Even the man who faced him was armed to the teeth, and could kill him before he had taken five steps. This menacing attitude made no difference to Nat; he never stopped whistling, while looking his interlocutor in the face.

"I wish to have some talk with you," said the Frenchman. "You are in great danger."

"Be I? That's funny."

"It may not end in a funny manner. You are a prisoner here."

"Did *you* rap me on the head?"

"No matter. Do you have any hope of escape? Look about you. Are not these grim foes?"

"They ain't han'sum, by no means," said Nat. "I've seen better-lookin' *hogs* afore now. Queer to see a white man in sech cump'ny."

"That is nothing to you."

"'Tis ef I make it so. I don't b'lieve you an' I kin git on together. Let me go back to my stake."

"Be careful."

"What about?"

"You will get into trouble."

"Shouldn't wonder. I've been thar afore now."

"You do not know me. It is in my power to give you to a fearful death."

"Now let's talk sense, old man," said Nat, in a patronizing way, highly aggravating to a man of the Frenchman's savage temper. "I judge you and I have lived long enough in the woods to know that one of us kain't scare the other. Least-ways, *you* kain't scare me."

"Perhaps not," said Le Renard. "Perhaps you do not know me. It is no more than fair that you should. I am Camille Devereux, captain in the service of the Emperor of France, and an Indian Deputy. Perhaps you would know me better by the name the Indians have given me, Le Renard."

"Oh, I know you well enough, capting," replied Nat, coolly. "I'll say, honest, that I don't s'pose thar is a man, from one end of the colonies to the other, better known and worse hated on

our side. You couldn't have named one I knew better for a murderin' skunk."

"Sacre!" sputtered Le Renard. "Do you dare to speak in that manner to me?"

"Wa'al, old man," said Nat, expectorating freely before he spoke, "what's the use of lyin'? I tell you the people cry out agin' ye through all York. An' why shouldn't they? A man with your gifts, goin' contrary to 'em as you do, don't deserve that any man should speak well of him. You was brought up in a Christian land, they say. I don't allow it, mind, 'cause, in my opinion, men ain't Christians that act in the way you do. Christians! Any thing but that; a cussed half-an'-half: a mixture of the blood of the red, painted heathen of the woods an' the hot blood of the French. Oh, I know the blood you sprung from, Mister Fox."

An unnatural paleness showed itself about the thin lips of the Frenchman. His eyes fairly blazed. He made a sudden bound and grasped the scout by the throat. But Nat never flinched, and stood looking his enemy coolly in the face. He knew well that, upon this point, the Frenchman was peculiarly sensitive and that any mention of the fact would arouse his anger. He was in truth of mixed blood. Many of the partisans who did the cruel work of the French on the border during this war, owed, it is assumed by French historians, their ferocity to this fact. Any thing to relieve the French nation from the execrable reputation which attaches to the deeds of such men as Le Renard.

"Canaille!" shouted the Frenchman, "do you want me to choke your life out?"

"I don't mind, if you kin do it," replied Nat. "I'm a pris'ner. But don't let that stop you. It's a small thing when you git used to it, to take the life of a man that kain't help himself. It's no more than I mout expect."

"You deserve to die."

"All on us deserve that, more or less," replied the imperturbable ranger. "I hope you don't think I kin die until my time comes; an' when it does, I think I'll be as ready to meet my fate as you. I won't show the white feather, I promise you."

The hand of Le Renard dropped from the throat of the

speaker, upon which it had rested while he spoke. He had enough of the chivalrous blood of the French nation to understand that it was a shame for him to attack a defenseless man, and that man a prisoner.

"Now listen to me," he said, "we are both wrong. Reason is far better than force. I would like to be friendly with you."

"You kain't! It's catamount agin' stag. We ain't off the same piece. It was bred in me to hate an' Injin an' to distrust any Frenchman, with the mixed blood in his veins. You needn't flare up ag'in, it's true that you are sailin' under two colors."

"Peste! will you never understand that I forbid you speaking of that? Silence your vile tongue, for, as there is a Judge over us all, if I ever hear you speak of it in the presence of others, I will tear out your tongue by the roots and feed it to my dogs. And I have them here. Would you like to see them?"

He whistled in a shrill key, and two huge bloodhounds came bounding to his side. Nat could not help admiring their noble proportions. Strong, broad-chested, with tawny hides and blood-shot eyes, they fawned at their master's feet, growling viciously at the stranger.

"Keep the durned brutes off," said Nat. "I kain't say that I admire them much. Bah! Git out, there. Don't be smellin' round."

"How would you like to have them on your trail?" asked Le Renard. "Do you think they would make good scouts?"

"No," replied Nat. "They are too much like Frenchmen. Their mouths are always open. Now see here, Le Renard, I want to ask you a fair question. Do your men make good scouts? And don't they gabble too much?"

"They are the worst scouts in the world," answered Le Renard, honestly. "And they certainly talk too much. There is candor for you. Let me tell you that, for forest business, my men are nearly all Indians. *They* are not open to the charge of gabbling."

"They are good enough until they get into a fight, an' then they yell enough to raise the dead from their graves," replied Nat. "I like a man, in a fight, to set his teeth until they

grate, an' then strike out with all his might. A man that does that, you know, don't waste breath. He knows he has got the job on his hands, and the quicker he gets it over, the better for all concerned. Now, regardin' fightin' in the abstract, as my friend Captain Lewis Miller would observe, it *ain't* very nice. Bat taken positively, it's nice. I likes to fight. 'Cause why? When I git into a muss, I'm as happy as a king. S'pose I git popped over. All right. I take my chaine. An' a man, if he is only actyve, needn't git killed till he has had a deal of fun. Don't you see?"

"I see. You regard fighting as a pastime, then?"

"Eggzactly. Why need a man do any thing he *don't* consider a pleasure. He kin run if he must to save his sculp, though, I own, I don't take to running, *much*. Not that thar's any thing agin' runnin', but it ain't my way. I'd a heap rather fight."

"You were running this morning."

"Posityvely? Now, how do you know but it was what the Gin'rals call a joodicious retreat? I staid hereabout long enough to give the painted reptyle yonder a bloody mug. Jest see him. He looks as if he had run foul of a small-sized airthquake. How it *does* beautify an Injin, to be sure, to smash his countenance a little. When I hit him, he was as mean a lookin' reptyle as a hyena, with a nose as long as a Jesuit's foot; but *now*, if you keer to look at him, you kin see that he ain't nothin' short of an Injin Cupid."

"I doubt if he thanks you," replied Le Renard. "In the name of the saints, what did you hit him with?"

"He run foul of an airthquake," replied Nat, with the appearance of the greatest candor.

"Metaphorically speaking. But, in reality, what did you hit him with?"

"A stun," said Nat. "A small one, not larger than his head; a healthy limestun, full of little shellfish and wegetables that got penned up in it a hundred thousand years ago."

"He will murder you for that. Don't you see he was a beau in his way, and that you have ruined his comery looks forever?"

"No sech thing," answered Mohawk Nat. "He was a

hideous vagabone before ; now, comparatyvely speakin', he is handsome. He orter thank me. I heern tell of a feller, one time, that had the biggest pair of lips on his muzzle you ever see'd. Oh, they was *awful* big. Knew the man myself. He insulted a young chap one day, an' the youth hit out at him an' knocked his lips all to pieces. When he cum to his senses ag'in, and looked at hisself in a mirror, he was a good-lookin' chap. That blow had cured him of his big lips, forever."

"Is it possible?"

"It's more than that ; it's truth, Mr. Fox."

"My name is Camille Devereux."

"All right, Camel Devil You. Can't say I admire the name."

"You do not pronounce it aright."

"You'd better let me call you Mister Fox. That's what the Injins call you, ain't it? It's a purty name, too ; but, it don't matter. If you care to have me name you something else, I'll do it."

"Call me what you choose," said the other, angrily ; "but, attend to what I've been trying to tell you for so long a time."

"I'm talkin' now, myself. I was tellin' you about this young man that got his lip bu'sted. He found out that the boy that did the job was poor, an' he made him a handsome present for makin' him a handsome man."

"Enough of this, now listen to me. Let us waste no more time in silly badinage."

"Bad eggs ! An' silly ! Look here, Mister Fox. I'm a plain hunter, an' I won't stand that from any man !"

"You will drive me to do something I shall be sorry for afterward," said Le Renard. "I ask you once again to listen to me. I know you at your real worth, and it seems singular that a man of your sense should descend to such silly speech and behavior. You are a good scout, a brave man, an enemy worthy of my steel, whom I have sought to entrap for many a long day. I have you now, and I wish you to listen to me, as between man and man."

"Go on with your proclamation ; you've got the pig by the ear ; what yer waitin' for ?"

"I need such a man as you—one skillful in woodcraft, who will shrink from no danger and who goes to a battle as to a feast. I have been studying you this last half-hour, or I should not have borne with you so long. Together, we could do any thing we chose in Canada. Will you join me?"

"I don't think I understand what road yer a-drivin'."

"Renounce the service in which you are engaged. My sovereign is a man who never promises but he pays. That is the man for you. I know your king as well. He is an under-bred Dutchman, fitted by nature more for a swine-herd than for ruling so great a nation as the English; a small-hearted, close-fisted man, full of mean contrivances, of petty schemes, of villainous deeds; a man who always has his hand upon his pocket, fearful that some one will steal from him. How can you serve such a king?"

"You don't let him up very easy, do you, Mister Fox?" said the scout.

"He does not deserve it. He is the curse of your nation and mine, a grasping, avaricious dolt. This country is ours. It is."

"Hold your hosses a minute! Whose kentry is this?"

"The people of France are the rightful inheritors of this fair domain. The French claim it and will have it."

"When you get it, as the grapes said to the fox; but drive on ag'in; I want to hear all you have got to say agin' that Dutchman, the king of England."

"Nothing good can be said of him. He is a person incapable of governing justly and too low-minded to appreciate either his own subjects or the people of other nations. But, let that pass. It is enough that you are a colonist, and you know how poorly colonists are treated by this German money-getter. You have not even the satisfaction of being treated as servants worthy of your hire. Why not serve a sovereign who recognizes personal merit and pays red gold for every service rendered?"

"What would I do in his service?"

"You know the country like a book. I doubt if there is a water-course or lake within three hundred miles which you have not explored. You would be of the highest value to us, and we could afford to pay you well. I make you the

offer, and in earnest of my honesty I offer you now this purse, in which you will find one hundred Louis d'or. You may think the pay large. It is. We mean to make it for your interest to join us."

Nat took the purse in his hand, and weighed it in a meditative manner, while he addressed the tempter:

"And what am I to do for all this gold?" he asked.

"You will be expected to remain where you are for the present. At stated periods you will come to some French station, Montreal or Ticonderoga, and make report of all you have seen or heard in reference to the movements of the English forces."

"Any thing more?"

"In case we decide to attempt the invasion of the country, you must be our guide; map out for us the easiest routes and the best places for transportation. This purse is not your whole pay. I am empowered to bestow upon an agent like you, for each month he remains in our service, a sum equal to this you hold in your hand. And if, by your exertions, we are able to make any great advance in our designs, you will receive an additional sum commensurate with the service you are able to render."

"You pay well," said Nat.

It was indeed a great temptation. The tempted man always had gained his livelihood in the precarious fashion of the hunter; he had been compelled to be satisfied if a roof was over his head, no matter how poor, and with food enough, no matter of what quality, to sustain life. Never before had he held so much money in his hand. This, and much more, might all be his own.

He allowed himself a few moments for reflection. It was truly the golden opportunity for which every man of merit hopes and thinks and struggles. If he threw it aside now, all was lost, and his life with it.

"For this money," he said, slowly, "an' for the money that comes after it, I am to turn my back on my old comrades an' never ag'in dare to look them in the face?"

"Of course. In accepting my offer you sunder all old ties. Reflect well before you decide. If you refuse, the Indians claim you and I shall give you up. Barbed Arrow told me

not long ago that they meant to burn you at the stake. You insulted him, and the savages thirst for the blood of such an enemy as you have been."

"What do you think now, honest and true? If *you* were in *my* place, would you accept this offer?"

"Any man of sense could give you but one answer. You have ability; let it be recognized. If you could persist in your present service, what would be the result? Nothing but poverty, ill-treatment, and a wretched old age."

"That's more than likely," said Nat. "It *is* poor pay, I have, and not much promise of any thing better."

"Then take riches and honors when they are offered. Decide at once. If you refuse, I can not, will not help you; the Indians must do with you as they please."

"It's a good deal of money."

"And you will make it more. For a man of your ability will be sure to do something to attract the attention of your superiors. Besides, I will make you my especial care. You shall not be overlooked."

"You ar' very kind. An' all I have to do is to stay here an' let you know what's goin' on?"

"Precisely. It is not hard to do. There is no danger of detection. You are the man whom they would never dream of suspecting. You have the *entrée* of the forts, and the officers trust you."

"That's so," said Nat. "They *do* trust me. It seems a little hard to play them false, don't it, Mister Fox? I've been with 'em so long. They all know Mohawk Nat; an' they say, thar's old Nat Hazard, by Jinks, an' thar ain't gold enough in Canada to buy *him*. An' all the time I'd be a-takin' the gold!"

"These things must be forgotten," said Le Renard. "When men change sides, their former comrades are no more to them than their new ones used to be. It is the way of the world, changing like the moon."

"And I must change? You won't help me ef I don't?" said Nat.

"You may go to the devil your own way if you refuse," was the reply.

"But, I'm a white man. White blood is white blood, you

know, an' you have got a little of it in your veins. It ain't much, but it's *thar*, though it is French. Won't that blood make you save my life, even though I don't take your offer?"

"Never! Again I tell you I can not and will not aid you."

"It's a good deal of money; a *big* heap. I never had sech a heap in my hands before. 'Tain't likely I ever will ag'in if I don't take your offer."

"Never. I am sure of it."

"Then take it, you hound!" screamed Nat, dashing the heavy purse into the face of the speaker. "Take it, and the devil do you good with it. What do you think I am? *Who* do you think I am? Is an honest Englishman to be bought and sold for a song, like a Frenchman?"

Mad with passion, the Frenchman made a step in the direction of Nat, while Lewis, lying beneath the cliff, could hardly refrain from uttering a shout of approbation, at the same time debating whether he dared risk the attempt at the rescue of his comrade. But Le Renard paused, controlling his passions by an effort of his powerful will.

"I give you one more chance," he said, gnawing his livid lips; "one only, before I decide against you forever. Beware how you tempt me to do you an injury. I might be sorry for it afterward. Yonder stands the chief. He says he longs to see how so brave a man as the Long Arms can die. You know what death that will be. There is the warrior whom you have mutilated. He owes you a grudge, and will be pleased to see you at the stake. I pass over the insult to myself and forgive it. What do you say? France or torture?"

"I say that you are a low-lived skunk, for trying to tempt an honest man than you ar' to do something which would make him a thing to point at and hiss at all the days of his life. You may go to mass, you overgrown half-and-half Jesuit minion of a French tyrant."

The Frenchman sprung upon Nat, and the two fell to the ground together, locked in a close, though far from loving, embrace. As the Indians ran to the spot, the Frenchman succeeded in mastering his adversary, and drew a long knife, which he raised high in the air.

CHAPTER VII.

TWICE SAVED.

THE death-time of the bold ranger seemed at hand. He closed his eyes and waited for the stroke. It did not fall, for a light form, bounding down the rocks, seized the blade in the hand of the irate officer. It was the Swaying Reed. Le Renard started to his feet and looked in astonished admiration at the girl, who, with flashing eyes and leveled carbine, stood between him and his prey. Nat rose upon his elbow and looked at his new champion in amazement, which found vent in one expressive word.

"Jehosaphat!"

"Swaying Reed!" cried Le Renard. "What are you doing here?"

"Stand back there," replied Swaying Reed, promptly, "or I will shoot. You know I have a steady hand."

This was spoken in French, which Nat did not understand. But her attitude expressed her determination better than words could have done. Le Renard recoiled, and put out his hands in mock terror.

"I am slain already," he said, "but more by your bright eyes than by the carbine. The last I do not fear; the first have destroyed me."

"What are you doing?" demanded the girl, indignantly. "Tell me that. Very brave man, you! Kill poor man when he is prisoner. Huron never do that."

"You do not understand, Swaying Reed," said the officer, soothingly. "I am sure you can not, or you would not blame me."

"What you take a knife for, then?" asked the girl.

"I was angry," replied Le Renard. "The fellow grossly and repeatedly insulted me. My blood is hot. I do not endure a great deal from such as he is, and you see the result. I am glad you came in just as you did, or the result might have been worse than it is. Come, my fine fellow, get up."

"What you going to do?" persisted the girl. "Swaying Reed got white blood. She will not let you hurt him. He is a great brave."

"Women must not interfere with a band of warriors on the war-path," said he. "Come, let me attend to this man; and, for the present, you had better go away. I will go with you and see you safe. We must leave this Englishman in the hands of the warriors."

"*Won't* go away, tell you," said the woman. "Stay here. Let him alone. He is *my* prisoner."

"Yours?"

"Yes, I claim him. I keep him safe; no one shall hurt him. If they do, they must hurt Swaying Reed."

"But, my dear girl—"

"Perhaps Le Renard thinks he is talking to the French women at Montreal?" said Swaying Reed, haughtily, "else he would not talk to her in that way."

"I beg your pardon, Swaying Reed, only I wish to ask you by what right you come here and interfere in the affairs of men. This can not go on. I repeat, you must go with me. The warriors have something to attend to which does not permit the presence of a woman. You must go away."

"Must go; *must*! Is not Swaying Reed the daughter of a great chief? What Frenchman is there who dare tell me what I must do and what I must not do. I will stay."

"You must go."

"I will not."

"Swaying Reed, do not be too much a woman at this time. Do not be obstinate. I tell you such scenes as this about to occur are not for women to see. I only ask you to go with me to the place where I mean to camp to-night and leave the warriors to follow."

"You can not decieve me," she cried. "You want me to go away, so that they can murder the white man. I will stay here if I like."

"You will force me to be harsh with you," said he. "What you ask is impossible. Even I can not stay. The warriors must be alone. Besides, I wish to talk with you of something which lies near my heart. I hope you will listen to me and believe me."

"Is this a time to talk, *talk*?" said Swaying Reed. "Have I not told you never to talk with me of *that*?"

"And why?"

"Because I do not like you," said the girl, with great candor. "Because I will never listen to your bad voice when you talk of that."

"You could not be so cruel," he said, with a sneering accent. "You know I am your devoted slave."

"That is the way with a Frenchman. His heart is full of deceit. It is black like a coal in the ashes. Who would trust him? When he says to a maiden that he loves her and can never be happy without her, he lies. I do not believe them. And then, when they have the woman they love, or say they love, they leave her for the next face that pleases them. Is not this true?"

"Not of all. If some of our race are unfaithful, it does not follow that all are."

"A woman who has her eyes open can read a bad heart in a bad face," replied Swaying Reed, with a candor which would have done credit to any woman. "I do not like you. I told you that before."

"And yet, you do not like any one else? I mean, you do not know any one you would wish to marry?"

A blush stole into the face of the young girl. She was thinking of the handsome young captain whom she had met but yesterday, and whom she had tried to save. The bold eyes of Lewis Miller had done much in that brief space, in subduing the hitherto untamable heart of the wild girl. Le Renard saw that blush, and it condemned her in his eyes.

"Who is it?" he cried, fiercely.

"Who do you mean?"

"The man you love."

"And who told Le Renard that I loved a man?" she answered hotly. "He is a fool. He thinks he knows every thing and he knows nothing. I do not love any man."

"Is it De Chopart?"

"No!"

"Estes, De Ligney, Du Maurier, St. Jacques or Fontenaye?"

"Not one of these?" she replied.

"Who then?"

"The chief."

"What chief? I will kill him. Ha!" He looked fiercely at Barbed Arrow, who had walked to the other side of the platform the moment the girl appeared. "Is that the fellow?"

"No."

"Then who is it? By all the holy saints, I will have his name."

"The chief I love—I do not like to tell."

"Speak quickly. It will be something to tell in after times that the rival of Camille Devereux was a painted savage. Speak out."

"The chief I love," repeated Swaying Reed, "is—I am afraid you will do him some harm."

"You drive me mad, girl. His name I demand at once."

"Mehanatoc, chief of the Hurons!"

Devereux bounded a foot from the ground boiling over with rage. "Your father, minx; do you think I will allow you to make sport of me?"

"What will you do, most valiant Frenchman? Will you beat me?"

"You have forced me to do something which I was loath to do before," he said. "If you will not come with me without question, I will force you to do so."

"Would you dare?"

"Don't put it upon that. I dare do any thing. I am a daring man, they say. Come."

"Where would you have me go?"

"I told you before. To the camp I have chosen for the night."

"I will not go."

"Then I will force you."

He grasped her by the arm and began to drag her away. But, at this action came an interruption for which he had not looked. With a long leap, like a tiger springing upon his prey, the Barbed Arrow placed himself by the side of the Frenchman, and tore the girl away from his detaining arms, flashing his bright hatchet before his eyes in a peculiarly unpleasant manner.

"What!" cried Le Renard. "Do *you* interfere?"

"Let no man lay hands upon the daughter of Mehanatoc

"In anger, or I will kill him," replied the young chief. "She is the pride of the Hurons. They love her and will guard her life with their own. What Frenchman is there who dare touch her?"

"I will not endure your interference," said Le Renard. "She refuses to go away."

"Then she must stay. Why should she go away? Is she not always welcome in the camps of the Hurons? It seems as if sunlight had fallen upon the Tumbling Water since she came here."

"You are another victim to her charms, are you?" said Le Renard. "So, so; we draw together, then. But I want you to look reasonably at the matter. You do not want her here while you take vengeance on the white man?"

"It would be better if she would go away," replied Barbed Arrow. "But, if she says she will not, here she must stay. I will tell her. Swaying Reed, the warriors are very angry at the Long Arms. They will burn him with fire. That is the reason Le Renard wanted you to go away. Will you go with him? It is not right that you should roam the woods alone. Go with Le Renard to the next camp."

"Do you want to drive me away?" she said, flashing a look at him from her glorious eyes which found the way into his soul.

"You would stay always, if Barbed Arrow could keep you," he said.

"Then why do you drive me away?"

"Because it is not right that you should see the death of this man."

"Why should he die?"

"He is our enemy."

"What has he done?"

"He hates the Hurons."

"So do many more. But, why should you burn them for that? It is not right. A brave man does not kill his enemy in that way. He fights him bravely, and if he falls, it is well. But, if not, who would be so wicked as to kill him when a prisoner?"

"This white man must die," he repeated.

"Then Swaying Reed will go, since Barbed Arrow is so

cruel, and never look upon his face again. Listen. You must never speak to me again when you come back to the lodges. I do not care to see the face of a man who slays his enemies when their hands are tied behind their backs."

"Swaying Reed is the cruel one now," said he. "She forgets that these are the traditions of the Hurons and they think it no shame to burn an enemy. What would she have me to do?"

"Keep him, to show in the Huron lodges, that they may see the Long Arms of whom they have so often heard."

"I can not do it. The warriors demand the fire sacrifice and they must have it."

"Let it be so," she said. "Since Barbed Arrow cares more for the warriors than for Swaying Reed, I will go away with Le Renard, who cares more for me than that."

"Let Le Renard seek a wife among his own people," said Barbed Arrow, casting a gloomy look at the officer as he stood not far away. "The Huron maidens are not for him."

"Settle it your own way," impatiently replied the Fox. "I can not quarrel with you now. But, decide what you will do. We are wasting time. We might cut off this company which has come out after us, almost to a man, while we are talking here. *Whoop!*"

The sudden exclamation was caused by the action of Nat Hazard. He had been listening attentively while Barbed Arrow and Swaying Reed were conversing in the Indian tongue, and gathered from it that his danger was so imminent as to make it worth his while to hazard an attempt at escape. His first move was so sudden, so wholly unexpected, that the savages did not have time to comprehend fully what he intended to do, when he leaped completely over the head of the only Indian between him and the river, and plunged in. The place where he struck the water was just at the foot of the falls, where the water was churned into foam, and a whirlpool eddied in circles, drawing in every stick and leaf which came over the fall above.

The desperate deed appalled even the savages, and they looked in strange perturbation at the troubled stream, waiting for the body to rise to the surface. They waited five minutes, with weapons leveled. Still no sign. Whether he had been

swallowed up in the vortex beneath the falls, or carried down the stream, to be dashed into the pool at the foot of the next cascade, was a matter of doubt. They stood in silent indecision, expecting each moment that the body of the scout would be hauled up from the depths and cast upon the shore, where they could obtain the coveted scalp.

"Go down-stream, two or three of you," shouted Le Renard. "You may find him below the next cascade."

Two of the Hurons bounded away to obey the order. Scarcely had they turned the point of the rock, when their comrades heard a brace of surprised yells and the sound of a combat. Several darted to the spot, and found Lewis Miller disputing the passage round the cliff, sword in hand. One Huron lay dying at his feet, and just as the rest came in view he passed his blade through the body of the second, who fell like a log. Lewis withdrew the weapon and threw it down at his feet, drawing his pistols from his girdle. The coming savages were greeted by the unwelcome sight of a pair of long-barreled pistols, evidently in experienced hands. They recoiled in surprise and confusion, howling with rage as they saw their comrades lying at the feet of the young captain. Le Renard approached and called out to him to surrender.

"What terms do you give me?"

"I can not make terms with a single man. You must give up without conditions."

"That I refuse to do."

"Then we must come and take you. I warn you that we have the power to make this stubborn conduct very bitter to you. If you surrender now—"

"Brave Englishman," cried Swaying Reed, interrupting the speaker, "fight to the last. Better die there than by the death they will give you."

"Thank you," said the young man. "I will do what I can. I hold the death of two men in these pistols, and my blade is good for as many more, I think. You will find this a bloody path. Only one can pass at a time."

"He is right," muttered the officer. "And a brave fellow, I warrant him. Go on, there. Take him, dead or alive!"

The savages swarmed up to the pass, and two fell by the unerring aim of the long pistols. The place where he stood

shielded him from the shot of the enemy, and allowed but one to approach at once. The blade he bore had been tried on many a bloody border field, and in many a fray with the savages in his native woods. But, never until now had he felt such pressing need of his skill.

Three minutes passed, and in those three minutes two savage souls had gone to judgment. They fell back in terror from that fearful pass, and the solitary man who guarded it.

Le Renard, in a fury at their failure, drew his sword and made a rush at the brave young man. Their weapons crossed with a sharp hiss, and each knew that he had a foeman worthy of his steel. For, while Le Renard had acquired his skill in Paris, Lewis had been trained by one of the best swordsmen in the colonies, a man who seemed to wear a charmed blade, which he had used with great effect in the wars of England, one whose weapon was a shield, through which the quickest and keenest swords in England had failed to pass. Both were strong men, though Le Renard had a little the advantage in weight. Thrusting, feinting, guarding; parry, lunge, and disengagement; the sword of Lewis soon passed through the fleshy part of his antagonist's arm. To the surprise of Lewis he changed the weapon to his other hand and attacked him with renewed vigor. Lewis never before had met a left-handed fencer, and, for the first time, realized what a disadvantage it was to contend against such an assault.

There is something in parrying a thrust from a left-handed man, akin to the difficulty in a base-ball field of hitting a ball pitched from the left hand. In each case, the line is the same. A thrust from the right hand is direct; from the left hand, it seems to come in a curved line, and the difficulty is to meet it at the right moment.

Le Renard laughed as he saw that the change was annoying to his adversary and fought with renewed courage. In an instant, he had repaid the young man for the wound in his arm by a cut in the fleshy part of the thigh. He felt himself yielding, step by step, when a quick footstep sounded behind him and Blackwing was by his side. A stroke of the hatchet in his right hand laid Le Renard in the dust, with a bleeding head, while over him stood the Indian, uttering the war-whoop. There were two now to guard the pass.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DEATH-SONG.

"WELCOME, Blackwing," said Lewis. "You came in good time."

"Blackwing loves the noise of the battle," said the Indian. "The Hurons are dogs. He fears them no more than so many crows, that make a noise overhead and fly away. Blackwing is the son of Moneto, chief of the Oneidas. He is a chief himself. When the old chief dies Blackwing will sit in his place. Who is like the Oneida in battle? They are swifter than eagles. They are stronger than bears. They can see far ahead in the dark night."

This exordium was pronounced in a loud voice, for the benefit of the savages crouching behind the rocks. Lewis could not blame him for throwing this braggadocio in the face of the enemy, for he knew that it was in keeping with the character of the Indian, and was very annoying to those who heard it. Their shrill yells rung through the space about them. The Hurons were brave enough, but the situation of the pass was such that the two men could have withstood the onward march of an army.

"Hurons crawl like snakes in the grass," shouted Blackwing. "Who among them dares to face me? If there is such a one, let him come and do it. I will give the crows a feast."

This speech was received by a succession of fierce cries, followed by a hasty rush of feet in various directions. Swaying Reed called out to Lewis to run, but he, knowing that the path was broken in his rear, dared not make the attempt. Moreover their attention was called to the front by a sudden attack, which did not extend beyond rushes on the part of the Hurons, and sudden retreats, evidently for the purpose of keeping the attention of the defenders. All at once a score of dark forms came clambering down the rocks behind them, and attacked them in the rear. Though outnumbered twenty to one, neither of the brave men thought of yielding, but

struggled until they were literally crushed to the earth by the sheer force of numbers, wounded, but full of spirit. Both were bound hand and foot, and carried back to the platform from which the scout had plunged. Le Renard was also carried back, where he soon recovered, for he had a hard head. His first thought, when he could stand, was to look about him to see if any of the enemy were taken, and his eyes glistened with pleasure as he saw the two lying on the rock, bound and bleeding. He staggered to his feet, weak and dizzy, for the Indian had hit hard, and came to them as they lay.

"You have got into trouble."

"Not so bad as you will be in, when you die," said Lewis, who remembered what the Frenchman had done to drive poor Nat to his death. "You have murdered a man who was worth a nation of such men as you."

"I have killed no one. This hardly comes from you with a good grace, whose hands are yet reeking with the blood of my best men."

"You drove Mohawk Nat to his death."

"How do you know that?"

Lewis was silent.

"I understand your admission. You would have me understand that you have been spying about this camp. In an ordinary camp, you would be simply hung. But now, I can not say what your fate may be."

"It is not in your hands," said Lewis.

"In whose, then?"

"In the hands of one of whom you know but little—the God who rules us all."

The Jesuit priest crossed himself devoutly and Le Renard followed his example.

"We are good Catholics here," said he. "I had nothing to do with the death of your friend. If he would insist upon plunging from the rocks, how was I to prevent him? We should have done so if possible. But he was too hasty for us."

"You drove him to it. He preferred that death to the only one he had a right to expect, the terrible death by fire. I will repay you for the deed some day."

"You may be long in paying that debt, young man," replied the Frenchman, in a sneering tone of voice. "If I know any thing of your future you will hardly have time to attend to every little affair you may have on hand. Your stay on the earth will be short, indeed, if the Indians claim their dues."

"And what do you regard as their due?" said Lewis.

"Your body, to do what they will with it. As for me, I should like to interfere, but the fact is, you have killed some of their men, and they mean to make you pay for it."

"Do not think to frighten me. I am a wounded man, and in no condition to quarrel. But, give me a week to get back the blood I have lost, and then give me my sword and I will meet you on any piece of ground the world over, and beat you, too."

"You are modest."

"I am at least sincere."

"Your sincerity does you credit," said Le Renard. "But, much as I should like to meet you, I fear it will be out of my power to grant your request. Compose your mind and get ready for death. It must come soon."

He turned away and met Swaying Reed.

"Will you come with me a moment?" he said. "I have something to say to you and I may as well have it off my mind."

She followed him without a word and he ascended the cliff to the top of the fall. Huge bowlders were scattered about, together with some smaller ones. Le Renard offered to seat her upon one of these, but she declined.

"I can stand as well," she said.

"We may talk for some time," he said. "Pray be seated, as a favor to me."

"When I am tired I will sit of my own accord," she said. "Let Le Renard speak out. There is nothing to stop his mouth."

"I thought we would be better alone, and the warriors are attending to their dead. It was very wicked for these men to come here and kill them."

"Hurons ought to let them alone," said the girl; "they hurt nobody, if nobody hurts them. Why not let them go?"

"That is what I want to speak of. Do you think Barbed Arrow would be willing to let them go?"

"Not *willing*," said she, with a low laugh. "Perhaps he do it if I ask. Barbed Arrow think a great deal of Swaying Reed."

"Is he the one you love?" demanded the man, fiercely.

"No. Barbed Arrow great brave, but I not like him much. Fight, come home, always come to me. Tired of him. Wish he would go away to the west. Leave me alone, mebbe."

"Then you think he would not want to let these men go, but would do it for you?"

"I think so. Barbed Arrow do great deal for Swaying Reed. Always come to me, talk, talk, talk, same as you do. Get *tired* of him, always. Think of my people I can not own—the white people, who gave me a skin fairer than any of the Huron girls. I like them best. I wish I could live with them always."

"Shall I tell you how you can do this?" he said, eagerly.

"Be my wife, as I have sworn you shall be, and you shall always live with the whites."

"It is not Frenchman to whom my heart goes out," she said. "English are the best."

"You say that to annoy me. But give your answer. Will you be my wife?"

"No! Don't like you. Won't marry any one I don't like. If you talk to me so much I shall hate you too. Let me alone."

There was no compromise on the part of the girl. She told him candidly the state of her feelings, and, as might have been expected from a person of his hot temper, he became angry.

"You would do well to be careful. It is an honor seldom offered by an officer of France to one of your blood, and not to be lightly cast aside. I know your heart and will open its secrets to you. Where did you ever see yonder Englishman?"

The hot blood flushed up into her face and retreated. She did not speak.

"I know that you have seen him and I demand your answer. Speak out."

"How do you know I have seen him?"

"Don't waste time. I can not tell you how. Your face is proof enough. You dare not say you have never seen him."

"I have seen him before," she said, honestly. "Once, I saw him in Montreal, where he came on a mission from the English at Albany. I saw him again at Ticonderoga. And I saw him another time."

"When?"

"I won't tell you. I saw him, that's enough for you."

"Did you speak with him?"

"Perhaps I did, perhaps I didn't. I won't tell, and you can't make me. That is all I will say."

"I want a clear statement."

"You have all you will know about it," she said, shortly.

"Don't ask to know every thing."

"He is a handsome young fellow."

She was silent again.

"It would be a pity to have him die, when you could save him if you chose."

She threw a questioning look at his face. It told her nothing whatever.

"What do you mean?"

"You *can* save his life."

"How?"

"Place your hand in mine and say that, when I ask you, I may have you for a wife, and I will engage that both these men shall be at liberty before to-morrow morning. It is the only way to save them. Barbed Arrow will only give them up at my order."

"They are brave men," said the girl, trying to call her Indian stoicism to her aid, and making a signal failure. "You would not let them die?"

"Unless I have your promise to be my wife, they shall not live another day."

"You are determined?"

"I swear it."

"Then listen to me. You may kill them, as you have the power, but I would sooner see them die before my eyes than to be your wife. They will endure the torments like brave men, and I will hate you like death."

"Do I care for that now?" he demanded, in a fierce tone of anger. "Time was when you could have led me by a silken cord. Now I take the reins in my own hands. Make me this promise, fool that you are, or you shall stand by when the flames envelop the Englishman, and listen to his dying groans. It will be sweet music in my ears."

"You are a coward," cried the girl, in the *patois* which she could speak with readiness. "Do you hear me? You are a coward! You murder prisoners who come into your hands, and then try to set the hearts of those who care for them on fire. I hate you now, worse than any snake that crawls and hisses. And when the young captain is dead, I will come every year to the grave you make him, in spring, when the flowers are growing, and lie down on his grave and talk to him as he lies there. I will talk in whispers so that even the flowers can not hear what I say, and tell it to the birds. Where will you be then?"

"Be quiet. You drive me mad!"

"I will tell you. You will be *dead*. They will lay you down to rest in a place that is bleak and bare. Over your head the flowers will not grow, and the birds will not sing in the branches. They will know that a murderer lies there."

"Do you want me to kill you?"

"Do it, if you dare! You will live unloved. No children shall prattle about your hearth. Men, when they name you, will speak of you as the accursed; women will shudder and clasp their little children closer when you pass them by; and I will pray all my life that the vengeance of the Manitou may fall upon you, blasting and burning."

"Mad girl," he hissed, "you have given me the knowledge I desired. I know *now* who is the man you love. You are taken by yonder boyish face. Believe me when I say that this thing would seal his doom, if nothing else could. When you cry out against his death and curse me as the cause, you open your heart to me. And yet, I would save him if I could. God help him, I have no spite against the boy."

"Save him, save him! I will recall my curse and make it a blessing, if that will give him life."

"Will you put your hand in mine, and swear to marry me?"

"Never. You ask something it is not in my power to grant."

"Do not hope that *he* will ever love you," said Le Renard. "I know these English. They are cold and proud and would consider it a disgrace to marry an Indian woman."

"I do not think he loves me," said the girl, folding her hands in a dreamy way. "How could he, when he has seen so little of me? But, that is nothing. When I love, I love indeed. Go. You have lived a villain and will die a slave."

"Child," said the Frenchman, his hard face growing softer, "you are beautiful. You are the grandest woman ever seen, at least by my eyes. I love you, and would make you my wife honorably. If you repel me, I have but one path to go, and that is in the path of revenge. I know now who you love. You only spoke to him once, it seems."

"I did not tell you so."

"It does not matter. I know now how it was done. You went to warn him of danger."

"Yes," she answered. "I did that."

"You told him where to find us."

"No. I would not betray my people. He had men with him then. I bade him go back."

"How many men had he?"

"What is that to you? They are gone. They were cowards. They deserted him."

"Do you know how Blackwing came to be with him?"

"Blackwing is an Oneida. He hates Barbed Arrow and seeks for his scalp. Sometimes I wish he had it. You would have one rival the less. Will you let me go and speak with the white man?"

"What do you wish to say to him?"

"You shall hear it, if you wish."

"Go to him. If I read Barbed Arrow's face aright, the prisoner dies before long. What you say to him now, imagine you say to him on his death-bed. And yet I am sorry."

"You do not speak true. You are eager for his death. But he will not die until the time comes. I will go to him. But look. What are they doing with Blackwing?"

The savages had led the chief out upon the platform, to a place where a stunted tree grew out of a crevice. To this tree

they bound him, and then many of them climbed the bank and disappeared from view. In a few moments they returned, bearing bundles of sticks, fagots of wood, pine-knots, and various other combustibles. At a glance the girl understood it all. Angry at the slaughter Blackwing had aided in making, they proposed to burn him at the stake.

This hideous practice had not died out among the tribes, but was rather esteemed a glorious pastime. The men entered into the preparations with a zest terrible to see. Only Barbed Arrow took no part in the preliminaries, but sat upon a stone, with his face turned toward the falls. He had given his orders to the others in half a dozen words and only waited for them to get ready. When all was prepared he rose to his feet and faced the bound warrior.

"You are Blackwing, the Oneida," said the chief. "You know my name. I am Barbed Arrow, a chief of the Hurons. The warriors who go out to battle, and take scalps, know that if they are taken they must die."

"Who knows this better than Blackwing? He is not a coward. He has looked on death before, and death has feared to face him. Where is the nation like the Iroquois? Where the tribe like the Oneidas? The Hurons have been great, but the Algonquin spirit is no more. They hang upon the skirts of Frenchmen, because they are afraid."

"My brother speaks loud words. The Hurons hear him, and will answer for themselves. They will do what they can. But they fear that they can not do justice to so great a warrior. Their means for torture are simple. But, such as they are, they will do what they can with them. Perhaps the Oneida will laugh at them."

"The Oneida always laughs at the torture. There is nothing which you can do to make him groan. When you have finished your tortures, Blackwing will show you what an Oneida does when *he* tortures an enemy."

"It is well," said Barbed Arrow. "When we have finished, if my brother is able, he shall teach us new ways to hurt. We know he has many, for he has tried them on the Hurons, and they have gone home to the spirit-land, laughing at the silly ways of the Oneidas. But perhaps there is something else of which we know nothing. You will do some-

thing if you can raise a hand when we have finished. Are you ready now?"

"When *you* are," said Blackwing.

The chief retired and spoke to the others, and they began their fiendish work. The first thing done in these cases is the practice of throwing hatchets. The younger portion of the warriors advanced first, standing within a few paces of the chief. One of them uttered a yell, and discharged his weapon at the head of the immovable Oneida. The weapon lodged in the tree, a foot above his head, and quivered there. This was a bad effort, and yells of derision greeted the young man as he removed his hatchet and retired in some confusion. The next one who came forward was the Catamount, a young dandy, who assumed a graceful *posé*, took deliberate aim, and—missed the tree altogether! Blackwing shouted out some epithet in the Huron tongue, which maddened the fellow so much that he dragged the knife from its sheath and made a bound in the direction of the prisoner, and would have killed him on the spot, had not Barbed Arrow, who stood near the tree, taking no part in the sport, shouted out an order for him to retire. The dandy obeyed, shaking his head angrily, but not daring to disregard the command.

When all the young warriors had tried their skill, a brave advanced, who was painted black as night, and striped with white and vermillion across the breast. This was one of the best of the Huron band, a man of undoubted courage but of most ferocious temper.

"Does the Oneida look upon a brave often?" he said.

"I see none now," replied Blackwing.

"I am Burnt Snake, the Huron."

"There is a woman of that name in the Huron lodges. I see her now."

"We will tear the flesh from your bones."

"The wolves can do that," replied the Oneida.

"We will dig out your eyes."

"The buzzards can do that," shouted the brave warrior.

"Can your tortures make my eyes dim or my voice weak? See! I am a chief of the Oneida! My heart is strong. A woman of the Hurons can not make me weep. What is pain to a man who is brave? He loves it; he laughs at it!"

"Laugh at this, then," shouted Burnt Snake, whirling the hatchet over his head. "Ah-ha!"

As the shout escaped his lips, the keen little ax flew from his hand and lodged in the tree within a quarter of an inch of the ear of the victim—so near, indeed, that it cut off a lock of his raven hair. But the muscles of the Oneida's face never moved, and the warrior, pleased with the stoicism which had enabled him to make so signal an exhibition of his great skill with the ax, could not refrain from a murmur of approbation.

"Blackwing is a great chief," he said. "He will go pure to the happy hunting-grounds. His spirit will take delight in chasing the deer beside the silent river. Wagh!"

Three warriors of great skill now advanced, each with a hatchet in his hand. This was one of the most delicate experiments, and one apt to result fatally if the victim moved his head. They ranged themselves in line before him, and let fly at the same moment. Three gleams of light flashed through the air and darted toward the tree. Lewis uttered a cry of dismay. The shrieks of the girl broke out on the air, and the savages bent forward in great excitement. They heard a dull thud, and it seemed as if the three axes struck the tree together, and quivered there. The ax of the middle man had pinned the head of Blackwing to the wood by his flowing locks. The other two stood out on each side of his head, one just grazing his cheek. Nothing but the most wonderful control of his muscles had enabled him to stand the ordeal. His taunting laugh rung out unbroken.

"A woman of the Hurons can throw hatchets. But they can not daunt the heart of a great chief!"

Barbed Arrow gave a signal, and the work of the hatchet-throwing was over. Six warriors came to the front. First of all stalked the redoubtable Burnt Snake. They were all armed with knives, which they flourished over their heads with shouts which might have appalled the stoutest heart. But, Blackwing was made of sterner stuff. He knew that his danger was greater than before, and he thought to taunt the warriors, so that one of them would lodge a keen blade in his heart, and put an end to the torment. The Huron knew his men, and had chosen the most skillful as well as

coolest of the band to perform this last and most dangerous feat.

"Are you ready to die?" shouted Burnt Snake. "Have you sung your death-song?"

"An Oneida is always ready," was the reply. "There is a place for Blackwing at the council-fire in the land of spirits."

Burnt Snake advanced one foot and took his knife by the point. The muscular arm was thrown back and the bright weapon whistled through the air, turning once before it struck the tree, just above the captive's head. A murmur of applause greeted the effort, and Burnt Snake stepped to the rear, satisfied that he had done well. A second warrior advanced and discharged his weapon. It lodged in the tree just above the right ear of the warrior. The third struck on the other side, raising a white crease on the cheek of the Oneida. Two others lodged in the trunk just above the shoulders.

In the midst of this tempest of steel, the voice of Blackwing could be heard, clear and full, loudly taunting the Hurons as women and dogs and cowards, branding them by every insulting epithet, in the hope to induce them to end his life. He knew well that this was nothing to the torture to come. The Indians, however, were too well schooled to allow him to make them angry, and though some of the younger warriors were boiling with rage, and eager to finish him on the spot, those engaged in the knife-throwing lost no whit of their accustomed coolness. They advanced together and took their weapons and retreated, standing in line as before. At the signal they discharged the knives together, and each one lodged his weapon within an inch of the spot where it had stood before. Chinese jugglers, in their knife-throwing feats, are no better than the Indians. Nor can one of that impassive nation receive the iron shower better than did Blackwing.

The preliminaries were now over, and the other warriors came forward with their knives. They no longer took pains to avoid striking the body. In five minutes, blood was flowing from a dozen wounds, not one of them in a dangerous point. His arms and legs were literally riddled. Still he stood, calm and collected, greeting each fresh wound with a shout which

made the old rocks ring again. At last Barbed Arrow stayed them in their work and once more came forward.

"My brother," he said, "when you told us you were a great brave, and a child of a chief, we did not know but you were telling us lies. We believe you now. A good warrior only can endure without flinching the trial of the knives. You have borne it well, and if you go safely through the trial by fire, the great Manitou must give you a place in his lodge. We are glad that we have taken so great a warrior. It is not often that my braves meet a man whom they can not make to howl. You have not spoken except to revile us, when the blades pierced your flesh. Are you ready to die?"

"Why do you ask that again?" replied Blackwing. "Let the trial begin."

Barbed Arrow inclined his head and stepped back, the younger warriors set eagerly to work, and began to pile the fagots they had brought about the feet of the prisoner. Two or three of the knives remained in his flesh on purpose to add to his tortures. But he only smiled, and looked at the young warriors at his feet in pitying contempt. Yet even in this extremity he looked about him for some visible means of escape. He could see none, look where he would. On every side, dark, revengeful faces hemmed him in. On the rock above the fall sat Le Renard, watching the proceedings with a curious eye. Swaying Reed had crouched at his feet, and covered her face with her hands. Having one hand free, Blackwing shook it at the Frenchman on the rock.

"Son of the Huron and the French!" he shouted, "a time will come when the deeds of the Oneida will make your heart so very sad that you will pray to die. Look at me. I am a warrior. I will show you how to die."

"I have nothing to do with it," said Le Renard. "Why do you speak to me?"

"I speak to a dog. I speak to a whelp who is half Indian and half French. Hear the death-song of a chief:

"Come ye near; a chief is dying,
See the scars upon his breast; !
He is coming, he is coming,
The warrior hurries to his rest;
Hear ye not that dread commotion,

See the flashing in the west ?
He is coming, the Manitou,
For the chief he loves the best.
Gather ye yet closer round me,
Heap your blazing fagots high ;
Come yet nearer, nearer, nearer,
Let your shouts assail the sky ;
Closer yet ; and I will show you
How a gallant brave can die.
Ye are many, ye are strong,
But the Iroquois are stronger ;
He will sweep you from the earth,
When he cometh in his anger ;
Now I hear them ; now I see them,
Spirit hosts are hovering nigh ;
For they love to sweep the heavens,
While I show you how to die."

There is no language in which to tell the solemn earnestness of that song, or the brave bearing of the singer. The English language is inadequate to convey a full idea of the beauty of the language used, or the power of its utterance. The hills took up the melody and shouted it back in the ears of the Indians. Even Barbed Arrow paused as he stooped to apply the torch. As he did so, a light form bounded to his side and fell at his feet, clasping his knees. He looked down at it in a kind of pity, for, as a savage can love, Barbed Arrow loved Swaying Reed.

"Daughter of a great chief," he said, "what do you here?"

"I am here to beg for something at the hands of the Barbed Arrow," she replied. "I would have him look upon this brave man, and tell me if it is right that he should die."

"The warriors have spoken," said the chief. "They have said, 'Let him die!' and who can speak against them?"

"Brave men should not murder one another," pleaded the girl. "If you killed him in a battle, you would have the right to wear his scalp. But now, who shall wear it?"

"No one. He is brave ; he shall take his scalp with him to the happy hunting-grounds. Let the Swaying Reed turn aside. This is the work of warriors, not of women. She has no business here."

"Swaying Reed will go back to her people," said the girl, in a low voice, "and she will always remember that twice in

one day she asked a favor of Barbed Arrow and he refused her request. It will be a good thing to remember."

"Why will Swaying Reed speak as if it was nothing she asked from Barbed Arrow? Speak to the warriors and see if they will let him live. If they say yes, so say I. But they will not let him go."

"You are the chief; they will do as you wish. But your heart is hard. Your eyes are red, and you see blood. You have a wicked heart."

"Let Swaying Reed go away," said the chief, angrily, "since she will not do me justice. The forest is wide enough for both."

"I will go," she answered, rising, "and tell to my father the words of Barbed Arrow. Then he will no longer ask me to enter the lodge of the chief, and keep the lodge-fire bright."

Barbed Arrow seized her arm.

"You are going away in anger," he said, sadly, "and you forget that your eyes light the path of life in the way of the Barbed Arrow. How can he live if Swaying Reed is angry with him?"

"Barbed Arrow will find some maid, who will ask nothing and give all. Such a maid I am not. But I will not stay and see this murder," she answered, shaking off his hand.

"You will stay," said Barbed Arrow. "Before, when I asked you to go, you would not. Now you will stay, for I will keep you."

He advanced to seize her, but was driven back by the little carbine pointed at his breast.

"Keep back!" she said. "My aim is true, and I will shoot. Do your bloody work, but touch not a child of the chief."

As he staggered back in dismay, she gave an agile spring, and was half-way up the cliff before a hand could be outstretched to stay her. But, here she paused and looked down upon the ruffianly band, like a queen on her throne.

"Do your work, bad Hurons," she said. "The time is coming when you shall hear from Swaying Reed again."

She continued the ascent, and had reached the top of the cliff, when a smoke from below warned her that the pile was

lighted. A species of fascination compelled her to look down. A bright flame was leaping up among the twigs and leaves at the feet of Blackwing, and crawling up to the fagots above. She swung her hands aloft in a sublime and impressive gesture.

"The curse of the Manitou, the lover of good deeds, light on you forever," she cried.

"Child of the Huron," shouted Blackwing, "you who have spoken a word for the Oneida, be sure, in the happy hunting-grounds I will remember your face. The flames can burn my body, but they can not touch my spirit. Wab-tee!"*

As he spoke, the waters seemed to open underneath the rock; a man arose from the boiling flood, sprung upon the platform, and with a movement rapid as flame, cut the bonds which bound the Oneida to the tree. So sudden was the movement, and so appalled were the savages by what they took to be a vision, that they hardly had time for thought before the Oneida was gone, leaving the Catamount dead in his tracks, struck down by his own hatchet, which Blackwing snatched from his hand as he passed. His rescuer was no other than Nat Hazard, who plunged again in that boiling whirlpool, and was lost to sight, leaving the Hurons dumb-founded and dismayed.

"After the Oneida!" shouted Barbed Arrow. "He is gone!"

Awakened from their trance, half a dozen warriors bounded away on the track of the flying Indian. But, upon that bare rock he left no trail. They knew that he could turn neither to the right hand nor the left, and they hoped to overtake him before he could get out of the ravine into the open woods beyond. Once there, they knew that he was safe, for the Oneida was fleet of foot, and knew the woods better than the Canada Indians. But when they turned the angle of the rock, he was gone! Where, they could not tell. They followed the insecure path until they reached the shelf broken down by the passage of Lewis. Here they were at fault, and reluctantly returned to their companions, who were likewise completely at fault, for the scout was as utterly lost as the Oneida. They looked at one another in speechless amaze-

* Farewell.

ment. The Indians are naturally superstitious, and they could not account for the sudden disappearance of their white enemy. They had seen him, before their very eyes, plunge into the boiling flood at his feet, and disappear from view. Even the Frenchman was balked, and looked this way and that, seeking for some clue to the matter. But he looked in vain.

"Come away," he said. "It is getting dark, but we must get to our old camp. There is no luck in this place. Even the waters give up their dead to fight."

A taunting laugh sounded above the roar of the water, coming from Swaying Reed, who still stood upon the rock.

"The spirits fight against wickedness," said she. "Let Le Renard beware."

With a savage curse, Le Renard mustered his men and marched away. Scarcely had their retreating footsteps ceased to sound, when there was a splash in the water near at hand, and a moment after, the lank locks of Mohawk Nat rose slowly from the foam.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CLOUD HANGS LOW.

THE scout drew himself up on the rock, and gained a footing on the firm platform above, a grin of delight making his countenance fairly radiant. He was pleased with the work of the day. Since he had been taken, he had not only escaped, but had freed the Oneida from his bonds. The dismay of the Indians at his Jack-in-the-box appearance and disappearance touched his sense of humor, and he whistled a lively air as he sat on the rock, and, lifting up one leg, allowed the water to drip from his heel.

"Did it *that* time, *sure*," he muttered. "Now, then, whar's that Injin? I *want* the red cuss."

His question was answered by the appearance of Black-wing, who had simply retired into the space behind the rock, which he had showed to Lewis before their capture. Safe in

this hiding-place, he had seen his pursuers go by, and had heard them on their return. The moment he was satisfied they were gone, he issued from his nook in the rock, just in time to see the scout emerge from his hiding-place and gain a footing on the rock. Blackwing was a little afraid of his white brother; he did not understand where he had been hidden, any more than their enemies did.

"White brother *dead*?" he said, in a questioning tone.

"What!"

"Dead, I say--drown down dere? Come up ag'in. White man not a fish."

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared the scout. "Do you think I'm a sperrit?"

"Why you no drown, den?" demanded the Oneida. "See. Now stick in dere, him gone. Whar him gone? No come up no more. How you do it, den?"

"I ain't a sperrit yit, Oneida," replied Nat, "an' ef I know my own heart I ain't a-goin' to be, not with my full an' free consent. Leastways, not yit. Would you dar' foller me down thar now? I'd show you whar I hid."

"No drown, den? Hid in dere?" said Blackwing.

"Bet you!" said Nat. "That whirlpool brings a man up agin' the side of the rock, and when ye once git in thar, it's as dry as a bone. The water leaves a place between it an' the rock big enough for a company of the rangers. Oh, Jemima! It's the neatest place you ever see. Won't you come down? You kin swim."

"Yes."

"Then foller me."

They plunged into the eddy together. For a moment they were whirled helplessly about in the current and the next struck the base of the cliff over which the water fell. Grasping it with both hands the white man raised himself to a sort of elevated platform, in front of which the sheet of dark water tumbled slowly down, changing its hues as it fell, from black to snow-white. Blackwing saw in a moment what a capital hiding-place this was, and to what advantage he could turn it in case of a close pursuit.

"How you find him, eh?" he asked.

"When I dumped myself into the water the fust time,"

said Nat, "I thort mebbe I could swim acrost. Somehow the eddy caught me, an' threw me up agin' the rock. I hung on like death to a dead nigger, an' then I found I could breathe, so I pulled myself up, an' here I was. I c'u'd see you two chaps givin' it to the Hurons. You hit out from the shoulder. I thought I'd come out an' help you, but they'd got all my weepens, an' I ain't no use without them. I thort I could do you more good by an' by. Turned out I were right. They had you pooty fast. Considerable of a musical genius, you be, ain't you?"

Blackwing looked puzzled. The figures and strophes of the ranger disconcerted him, for he was not sufficiently master of the English language to follow them.

"You sung, you know," said Nat. "What a voice you have got for cold beef! Sich a voice would be a fortin to one of the play-actin' chaps I see down to Albany one time. They was boys belongin' to the 60th. You orter hearn 'em yell."

"A warrior sings his death-song when the fire is about him," said Blackwing, showing some slight signs of anger.

"I don't say nothin' agin' it," said the other. "It's accordin' to your traditions, an' I know the race set a heap of store by ther traditions."

"They were given to us by our fathers," said Blackwing. "Indians always remember. Our fathers sung in the flames, so do we. It is right that we should do so."

"Course it is—course it is, Blackwing. I'm a forest man myself, an' I am summat larnt in the traditions of the Iroquois. I've got my traditions too an' I foller 'em. You've got yours. That's all right. Come this way. I want to show you sommat."

The Indian followed him along the platform for a few feet until they reached a place where the sheet was broken into thin flakes, between which they had a good view of the place where Blackwing had endured the torture not long before. It was nearly dark and yet they could make out the blackened tree, and the smoke rising from the embers of the fire which was to have consumed the Indian.

"My brother," said Blackwing, taking the hand of the white man, and laying it on his heart "you hear heart beat

here. Not long time since, Blackwing stand at post. You come, you set him free, and both get away. Some time, meb-be, you in danger. You call Blackwing, den. *Him come.*"

"Thank ye. All right, old man. It's a fair barg'in. I helped you, you help me when you git a chaine. Thar's lots of times when I need the help of an arm like yours, though I'm a hoss myself. You'd better believe it. I'm the great half-an'-half, an unwashed specimen of the universal Yorker. I kin climb the tallest tree that sprouts in these woods. I'm a full team, an' no mistake. I kin lick a tribe of Hurons and eat 'em without salt. Whoop! Let somebody try me once, jest for fun. Oh do! Let out at me. Throw me once. I like a fight as I like trout. Hi! hi!"

Strange as it may seem, this boastful address pleased the savage. It was like his own people to boast of their exploits and to expect it in others.

"Now look here," said Nat. "I'm a hoss, I tell you. Once I cum up with a party of forty Hurons. I didn't leave a grease-spot of them. Why? They riled me; *that's* why! I don't ask anybody to help me. I'm a four-hoss team, I am. Once I c'u'd take a moose by the nose an' throw him. I don't think I c'u'd do it now. I'm gittin weak, I am. But ef thar is any Injin in the north woods thinks he kin throw me, let him send for me, that's all."

"My brother very brave," said Blackwing. "Warrior never forget. The fire was at his feet. He was about to die and he sung his death-song; but the Long Arms came."

"Long Arms! I guess so. That's the name the Hurons give me. I've got a powerful reach. When I stretch out my hands an' git a grip on any one, they've got to come down. An' that makes me think I lost my grip once to-day, blast me if I didn't. It wasn't my fault but I did it. Le Renard, old Foxy, you know he's a mighty strong chap; but, I kin throw him on fair ground, twice out of three times. I *know* I kin do it."

"Le Renard has a bad heart," said Blackwing. "Mus' get him scalp, sometime. Like him scalp, bes' of any scalp I ever find."

"I won't git in your way when you're down on him. Darn his hide an' picter. What *does* he mean? He was the man

that caught me this mornin'. I was all right, sure to git away, but he hid in the bush, an' mauled me over the head. I'll pay him for that. They cut you up powerful bad, didn't they? That was jist like the dogs."

Blackwing looked proudly at his many wounds.

"When I go back to the Oneidas," he said, "I can show them these, and they will say, our chief has a brave son, and one who will make a great ruler for the Oneidas."

"That's Injin, all over," laughed Nat. "Rip my buttons ef he ain't proud of gittin cut up like sausage. You stood it like a man, I'll say that. I should have cussed till all was blue. Ain't ye weak?"

"Blackwing go with Long Arms, help white cap'n," said the chief. "Strong, much strong now. Always ready for fight."

"Jest ez you say," said Nat. "I ain't goin' agin' any thing you say. No use of that, an' I need help ef ever a chap did. I'm goin' to git the cap'n out of this trouble or bu'st something, you bet on that."

"My brother never leave fr'en'. Cap'n much good man. He kind to Oneida, and very brave."

"Say; do you know what's 'come of the other fellers what was with the cap'n?" said Nat.

"Gone. Put guns on shoulder and run like little dog. Cowards. No brave. Blackwing fin' 'em, take 'em scalp, sure. Ain't good warrior; 'fraid of Huron."

"Hold on," said Nat. "I want to understand this yer. Do you mean to tell me, for sure, that the men we brought up here, Tom Turner an' Bates, an all of 'em, turned tail an' run acause the Hurons was here?"

"Yes. Cap'n say so, his own self."

"Then, by Jemima Jehosaphat—an' that's the strongest oath I know—I'll lick every man of 'em out of his moccasins the fust time I meet 'em. That's swore to; now let's go."

They dropped into the water, and by strong swimming regained the rock they had left. The Indians had removed their dead, but blood-stains were visible on all sides, showing where the savages had fallen. They climbed the rock, secured a brace of good knives, and set out upon the trail of the enemy.

The Hurons had marched at a good speed, keeping the prisoner in their midst. Swaying Reed joined them, and was closely watched by the Indians, who apprehended mischief, but did not dare to touch the beloved daughter of their chief. Lewis watched her too. His wounds were painful, but there seemed a balm for them in getting a smile from her, now and then.

Whenever their eyes met, hers lighted up and immediately dropped before the burning glance of the young captain. Once, when they halted, she came and spoke to him, standing before him with hands meekly folded. She only asked if his wounds were painful, and whether she could do any thing for him. Her face had the rosy glow which he had seen on it that morning when they first met. He read her secret. The gallant bearing of the young provincial had conquered her, the untamable, as it had been victorious over many a maid in the Mohawk towns. But, while he ever had been cold toward the victims he had slain with his charms, he confessed to his own heart that he had met his match in this wildwood flower. If she loved him, and had given him her heart in a day, he had nothing to boast, for he was willing to bestow his own with equal haste. The wound in his thigh, which he had taken from the sword of Le Renard, was painful—so much so, that the expression of his face as he walked satisfied Le Renard that if he wished to keep him up until they reached Ticonderoga, he must give his prisoner rest.

Hence, as darkness came on, they made a camp a mile or two short of the ground where they had intended to rest for the night. The spot selected was by the river, in a place where it ran between grassy banks, and plunged, a half-mile below, into a ravine, the last high land before its waters reached the level valley of the Mohawk, and at last joined that noble stream. They there camped, and secured their prisoner to a tree in a standing posture. He begged to be allowed to lie down, on account of his wounded limb. This was granted, but he was tied firmly, and secured at the head and feet by strong cords, to a brace of small saplings. The party set to work and caught fish, which were cooked hastily. Swaying Reed brought a portion to the captain. Barbed

Arrow accompanied her, unbound his prisoner's arms, and stood near him while he ate.

"Hurt bad?" he said.

"Not seriously, I think. I can not walk well," said he, in French.

"I am sorry you killed some of my men," said Barbed Arrow, in the same language. "They are very mad. My white brother helped me when the Long Arms had his rifle at Barbed Arrow's breast. Barbed Arrow would help him if he could."

Swaying Reed gave Barbed Arrow her hand. The chief laid it against his breast with a grace that would have done honor to a courtier.

"The Swaying Reed knows the heart of Barbed Arrow. It is all hers. It flies to her like a bird in the sky. When she is near him, it sings for joy; when she is gone, it mourns. There is no beauty in the air, none in the trees, neither in the pleasant water when she is away."

"Then let Barbed Arrow be kind to the Swaying Reed," said the girl, flashing at him an indescribable gleam from her dark eyes. "Let him not refuse what she asks. See. This white man has killed Hurons in battle—that is true. But, *why* did he do it? The Hurons came upon him with arms in their hands and would have destroyed him. He fought to save his life. He came to save that of his friend, ~~as~~ he had already saved Barbed Arrow from that friend, when the rifle was at his breast."

"I have not forgotten," said Barbed Arrow.

"How can the chief say he remembers," replied the girl, "when he seeks the life of the white man who has saved him from death? Is this right? Is it honorable? Is it like a great chief of the Hurons? The Swaying Reed says, no."

"Swaying Reed will forget that I have not all power," replied the chief. "See. The warriors have been out a week and they have not even one scalp to carry home to their lodges. Seven of their brothers lie dead on the war-path, and the hands which laid them low yet live and move. Black wing was here, and the Long Arms was here, but where are they now? They are gone. Blackwing stood at the war-post, and the Long Arms came up out of the water and set

him free. A curse upon his head. His scalp shall hang at my belt."

"And shall the white man go free?" she asked.

"How can Barbed Arrow tell? If the braves say so, I am willing. But they must speak."

She turned away from him in anger, and gave her hand to the captain. Barbed Arrow looked on in silence, notwithstanding the interest she felt in the prisoner.

"I am going away," she said, in broken English. "I have done what I could. The chief will not listen to my voice. It has no longer a charm in his ear. My friend, I can not tell when I shall come again. But, I shall remember. When the time comes to end your life, think sometimes of the Swaying Reed, who is not all an Indian."

He pressed her hand warmly in both his own.

"If I live," he said, "and escape from the hands of the Hurons, I will find you again, though I go through and through the lodges of the tribes."

"Why does Swaying Reed tarry?" asked the chief, impatiently. "She has talked long enough. Let her come away. The white man must not speak with the daughter of a chief."

She turned from him coldly, and drew the belt about her waist tightly, preparatory to departure, never looking the chief in the face. A few feet away, Le Renard stood leaning on his rifle and looking at her in a covert way which was most annoying to her. With a quick movement she was by his side.

"Why does Le Renard look at me?" she demanded, fiercely. "I hate him. He is a fool! He does not know when a woman hates him. Go. You will die a bloody death."

"Do not be angry, *ma petite*," he said, with a sneer. "You have good cause. When to-morrow's sun shall rise, you will be without an English lover. You saw Blackwing at the stake. He bore it bravely. Yonder fellow will howl."

She struck him in the face with her open palm. He recoiled in anger, a red spot burning on either cheek. For a moment it seemed as though he would lay hands on her, but a glance at the chief, who was watching them closely, restrained him. He was too good a General to make the Huron angry a second time for the same offense. But, he came

close to the girl, and laying a hand upon her arm, whispered to her.

"You struck me, and you are a woman. For that I will have a terrible revenge. Ah, fool that you are, you could not help going too far. Even I will not bear any more at your hands."

"Take your hand from my shoulder," was the only reply he received.

"At least, you understand me."

"Yes. You are a coward. Do not trouble me. I am going away. You will do this murder to-morrow. But, if you do, I swear by the Great Spirit that I will follow you, and kill you with my own hands."

"You!"

"I! The Swaying Reed! I am a woman, you will say. A true woman has a heart to revenge a wrong, and I will kill you if you do this deed."

He laughed aloud.

"You would do it if you had the chance, my darling, but that you never shall. Since you will go, *au revoir*."

She turned away and plunged into the darkness. The moon did not rise until very late. As the branches closed behind her, Le Renard went to the side of the chief, as he stood by the fire, after securing the prisoner.

"The Swaying Reed has gone," he said. "Has the chief asked himself why?"

"She is angry because we will not set the white man free," replied the chief.

"She has another motive, which the chief has not thought of," said Le Renard. "When before this did she follow us on the war-path? When did she interest herself so much in a prisoner? She is a woman; she has a woman's heart, and the white man is a handsome fellow."

"What does Le Renard mean?" demanded the chief. "Let him speak."

"She loves him."

"Beware!" replied the other, haughtily. "The Swaying Reed is the chosen wife of Barbed Arrow. Let no man—I say no man, look upon her as a lover. I will kill him if he does."

"This young man has done it."

"It is false. She never saw him before."

"You are in the wrong, chief. She has deceived you. She has seen him twice or thrice ere this."

"How does Le Renard know this?"

"She told me," replied Le Renard, "only this morning. Now will you let any notion of gratitude make you spare the life of this man?"

"He shall die," said Barbed Arrow. "His grave is dug already. He dug it himself, when he dared to look upon the Swaying Reed."

"When shall he die?"

"To-morrow. As the sun rises, he shall take the place from which Blackwing escaped. Then we will go on and do our work."

"It is well. This young man is a war-chief, and one of the bravest among the white men. If he dies, the way is open to Schenectady, for they have no leader equal to him. Now I will tell you my plan."

And the two sat down, and wove a dark plot, to lay waste the settlements along the Mohawk from that point to the Hudson.

CHAPTER X.

HOW THEY DID AND HOW THEY DID NOT.

THE night closed in—a night dark as Erebus. Heavy clouds obscured the sky, and the shadows lay like a heavy robe upon the river. The Hurons, well disciplined, sent a number of outlying scouts through the bushes, in various directions, so as to cut off the possibility of a surprise from the forest. On their front ran the river, with a high bluff on the opposite side, so that an attack from thence was simply impossible. The region they were in, too, was bare of troops. The only men they had to fear were the rangers, and these had gone back to the settlement, leaving their captain to his fate. For the credit of this organization, and in justice to

them, it is but right to say that they numbered many men of tried courage, and even those who had so basely abandoned their captain, were men who never before had flinched, and had stood up nobly to the dangers of many a field. But, the sudden peril had been too much for them and they had shown the white feather.

Lewis was tied in such a way that escape without assistance was impossible. Indeed, he had but little hope. He knew that Nat was at liberty and would do all he could to aid him, but the number of the Hurons and their position must render any attempt at rescue a matter of extreme peril.

The night wore on, and the sleepless prisoner listened to every sound, hoping even against reason that Nat would come to the rescue. As he lay there he heard, at last, the sound of breathing not far away. He turned his head. Some one lay prostrate upon the ground near at hand, apparently asleep. He could just make out in the gloom that it was an Indian, but could not see which one. By and by this figure rolled over two or three times in his direction, and then stopped.

As it did so, to his surprise and joy, he caught a glimpse of the hawk-feathers of the Oneida. His friends had not forgotten him after all! At that moment a loon call—the signal by which Nat Hazard and the captain knew each other—sounded from the river-side, a little way down the stream. One of the Indian guards raised his head, but the cry of the loon even yet is often heard upon these waters, and the Huron dropped his eyes again, not noticing the dark form on the ground near the prisoner. This man was the only one of the guard who remained awake, for the savages, put at ease by the security of the position and the precautions taken from the outside to guard against surprise, had fallen asleep in fancied security. Ere long the last man was oblivious to all outward things, and the Oneida gave a final roll, which brought him to the side of the prisoner. The knife was already in his hand and the cords which bound the captain cut by four quick motions.

"Lie still," whispered the Oneida, with his mouth touching the ear of his friend. "*Wait.*"

The captain obeyed, and the Oneida raised his head and satisfied himself that all was quiet.

"Now," he whispered again, "crawl to river. Get in dere we git away, mebbe."

Crawling on their hands and knees, the two men reached the river-side and plunged in. A man was waiting there, no other than our amphibious friend, Mohawk Nathan. He was lying on his back in the water, with nothing visible but a portion of his face. Near by, and held by a small vine, was a log, on which they had crossed the stream.

"Let's git across as soon as we can," he whispered. "Thar'll be a row pooty soon. They won't sleep long."

"I can not swim," whispered the captain. "At least, I can only use one leg. The other is disabled."

"The varmints!" muttered Nat. "Then we ar' in a pickle. The only way is to stick to the water, for if you can't swim, I know you can't walk. Here, take my log. Rot it, what did you want to git wounded in the leg for?"

"The sword went through my thigh," replied the captain, as he threw his arms over the log and by its aid was guided silently down-stream by his two friends. "I got it while I was fighting with Le Renard, the mongrel. Ha! They are up!"

Fierce cries of rage and surprise now filled the air, and among them they could distinguish the loud voice of Le Renard, and the shrill yells of Barbed Arrow.

"What music," said Nat. "Now, I'll bet a jack-knife that Blackwing is sp'ilin' to give them back yell for yell. Ain't you, old boy?"

"Blackwing like to *holler* jest a little," replied the Oneida. "Full of holler! Full up to chin! Like Barbed Arrow to know *who* got cap'n away."

"He'll know in the mornin', when he sees your signs," said Nat. "Yah. Here's a shaller. You take keer of the log, Blackwing. As for the cap'n, I'll kerry him myself."

"Not strong 'nuff," said Blackwing. "Cap'n much big."

But Nat took the form of Lewis in his long arms, and, in spite of his great weight, lifted and bore him over the shallow. The rage of the savages could be divined by the ferocious yells which filled the air, mingled with Gascon oaths from the lips of the irate Frenchman, who felt the escape more than he would have cared to say.

Once over the shallow, Nat again placed his heavy burden on the log, and they pressed on, towing the wounded man through the deep pools.

"Oh Jemima Jinks," said Nat, who delighted in ringing changes on that favorite female name. "Jemima Jimini, *ain't* they mad! Won't they chaw us up if they only get a chaine?"

"Wait," said Blackwing, as they struck another shallow. "Hurons comin'. Hear!"

They listened and could hear the splash of swimmers and loud voices, warning them that the Hurons were on the track. Not only that, but doubtless swift runners had been landed, to cut off their retreat below. But these runners must make a considerable circuit, or else come on slowly, stumbling over the rocks along the verge of the stream.

"Cuss 'em," said Nat. "I don't want to be hard on nobody, but I say cuss 'em! They'll foller like hounds. How do ye feel, cap'n? You couldn't manage to run a mile or so, could you?"

"Not a foot. Leave me, my brave fellows. Go and save yourselves. You have worked nobly for me, but it is of no use. Now go."

"Ef you wa'n't hurt in the leg, darn me but I would whop you right whar you be," said Nat, in high dudgeon. "Who the screamin' Satan do you think I be? My name ain't Tom Turner."

"So it seems. But I order you to leave me. By going ashore, you can escape into the woods. As for me, I am helpless, and it only makes a difference of an hour or two in my capture if I go with you. If you keep by me, you also must be sacrificed. As your commander, I order you to go ashore and leave me."

"Order away! You don't think you kin make a fool of old Nat Hazard, I hope. If you do, I judge you are a good clean mile wide of the mark."

"Do you refuse to go?"

"I shouldn't wonder ef I did. Oh, if we only had a canoe! How we could buzz away from these buzzards! I know whar that is one hid, but it belongs to the Injin gal, an' it is two miles down the stream."

"You have seen her before, then?" said the captain, eagerly.

"Bet I have. Jemima Jehosaphat, *ain't* she a stunner? *Sech* eyes, an' *sech* feet! Whew. But we ain't got no time to talk about han'some gals. Them red devils is comin' on mighty fast, bet you. They know the river well nigh as well as you an' I do, chief. Swim your wickedest now. Every foot gained is the more chaine for us, an' we mout git to the canoe 'fore they do. Ef we only *could*!"

They were swimming across a deep pool, with the shouts of the Indians coming nearer, when they heard the dip of a paddle before them. They paused in dismay, for they could but think that the runners had got in front, and were coming up to meet them in a canoe. They struck the next shallow and the scout led the log up toward the bank.

"You stay thar, cap'n. Blackwing, come with me."

The chief obeyed without a word. During the day, he had seen so much of the wonderful skill in woodcraft possessed by the man, that he was ready to grant Nat the leadership, and to follow him without question. The captain had not time to make out what they meant to do, whether to desert him or do some desperate deed to aid him. Nat led the way along the shallow, now up to his knees in water, and again buried to his thighs, until they reached a point directly in the course of the coming canoe. It was then that Blackwing understood what his friend meant to do—to lie in wait for it, surprise and capture it, and escape down the stream. The light craft was coming on rather slowly against the rapid current, which made Nat think the canoe could not be fully manned.

"Stoop low," he whispered. "It's almost here. When the canoe touches your hand, seize it and hang on like death. Leave the rest to me."

The two desperate men were as still and silent as shadows. Behind them, not five hundred yards away, they could hear the coming foe. In front, the dip of that single paddle sounded in their ears. The dark form of the canoe drew near, guided by a single occupant. Blackwing, crouching until the water washed his breast, with his hand stretched out under water, felt the birch-bark graze it. His iron grip closed upon the gunwale as the ranger made a bound and dragged the single occupant from the seat. A scream which came from

the lips of a woman, sounded in their ears! Nat uttered a cry of wonder, mingled with an oath. At the sound of his voice the person he held cried out:

"Friend, Long Arms; friend! I am Swaying Reed."

"Je-e-e-rusalem! Whar *ar'* you goin'?"

"Going to save the white man," she answered. "Why you here? He was taken in trying to get you out of the hands of the Hurons."

"We've got him out of that," said the ranger. "'Twas a tight fit, but we saved him, so fur. But, we kain't get him no further. He's hurt in the leg; kain't walk a step. We thought you was—"

"Come quick," said the Oneida. "Come right now, while can save cap'n. Huron comin' fast!"

"Where is he?" demanded the girl. "I will help him!"

Blackwing led the way.

They waded back through the water, the ranger keeping his hand upon the gunwale of the boat and directing its movements. Swaying Reed sat in the stern, paddling vigorously. They found the captain seated on a rock near the shore, waiting for and expecting capture every moment. He had given up the two friends, having heard the cries of Swaying Reed, and thinking that they had fallen in with enemies and been overcome. Seeing the canoe, he started up eagerly, but dropped back again as his weight came upon his wounded limb.

"Take hold of him, Blackwing, and help me lift him into the canoe."

They raised him in their arms and laid him in the bow of the boat, in a half-sitting, half-reclining posture; Swaying Reed put the pistols which had been his in his hands. They had been loaded with great care. The girl then took her place in the bow and prepared to depart.

"Where shall we meet?" asked the captain.

"At the three maples on the point. Do you know whar they ar', gal?"

"Yes," said Swaying Reed. "I have been there."

"Then off with you, and may we find you safe at the three trees."

As the paddle dipped in the water, the moon, which had

been obscured by thick clouds, broke through its bars and appeared in full splendor. It was a singular scene: the girl, looking over her shoulder, from time to time; the dark river; the mountains in the background; the wounded man—all combined to make it one of unusual interest. As she paddled on, she gazed down at the man at her feet, and felt that, for his sake, she could brave any danger. The yells of her former friends warned her that they were not far away, and, while she did not fear for herself, she knew that her lover would be sacrificed the moment he was taken.

"It is not right for you to do all the work," said he, struggling up to a sitting posture.

"Be quiet," she said. "You are wounded. I will work for you."

"Do you know that you are a heroine?" he cried. "There is no one like you in any city in the colonies. Do you love me? You are to be my wife if we escape."

"My heart is an open book to you," she replied. "But, do not talk now. You *know* that I love you."

"Thank you, my darling. I thought you loved me. And it is all in a day. Let me look at you; let me talk to you. It may be the last hour we shall be together. These fiends on the trail are swift of foot, and some of them may be ahead of us. While the moon shines, let me see the woman who has periled so much to save my worthless life."

"Not worthless. Dear, very dear to me. If you die, I die too, or else I fear the wrong which Le Renard may do to me."

"Do not fear, my darling. It is not needed. We may escape. And if we do not, I have sufficient faith in you to believe that you will know what to do, when your case is desperate."

"I have at least a knife," she said.

"Then use it, not upon yourself, but upon him. I think it no impiety to say, Heaven itself will applaud the deed. These fellows are coming on fast. It can not be that they are swimming. They are provided with canoes."

"They have found one," said the girl. "The warriors often hide them beside the river. I can hear the paddles. They are coming on fast. No more words. Let me work."

She bent to the paddle with redoubled energy. For half an hour not a sound was heard but the steady strokes of the little oar, which drove the light craft down the current at a wonderful rate. But the Indian girl had learned the water-craft art on the northern lakes and rivers. It was well known that no warrior of the Huron tribe could compete with her, and that she had often beaten them in the contests so common in an Indian village. Her position in the tribe had been different from that of other women. No one, not even her father, ever presumed to say when she should come or go. No one was surprised if she took her weapons and was gone for weeks. This sort of training had made her what she was, a splendid type of a woman in grace and activity.

But the canoe which followed them was manned by some of the most expert canoemen of the tribe, prominent among whom were Barbed Arrow and Burnt Snake. Le Renard also had a place among them, and he was a known expert with the paddle. Their powerful arms drove the canoe in pursuit at a fearful rate, and the girl could hear that they came nearer every moment. She had turned a point in the river, and was leaving the rocky bluffs behind, coming out into a country somewhat open, where the pleasant meadows and beautiful villages of the Mohawk valley are seen to-day. Glancing over her shoulder, she could see the craft in pursuit, not a hundred yards away. In that quick glance, she saw that it held eight warriors, besides the Frenchman. It was a very large boat, which had been conveyed to this river in the last season, and hidden near it, for some such purpose as this. The Indians were bending to their work and gaining fast.

Not a quarter of a mile away she saw the three maples on the point. But, had the ranger been able to reach it so soon? She knew that he was fleet of foot, but the way was long, and perhaps he had met an enemy.

"Can you see them?" groaned the captain. "Oh, that I must lie idly here and do nothing to save myself."

"I have one life here," said the girl, with a significant glance at her rifle. "I know whose it will be."

"Whose?"

"Le Renard's. I hate him worst of all. Keep quiet."

Why do you try to get up when you know that you can do nothing? The point is not far away. I can see the maples."

"How many are after us?"

"Nine, counting Le Renard."

"I wish I could get a shot at him," said the captain, turning over so that he could look at their pursuers. "Will your carbine carry that distance?"

"I do not know. But it might keep them off?"

"Paddle on, then. Where is your powder-flask? I've got it. Thank you. Does this little weapon shoot straight?"

"As true as any rifle."

"I'll try it. Paddle as steady as you can. Easy! I'm ready. Take that!"

The last words were addressed to the savage in the bow of the approaching canoe. At the word, he started wildly to his feet, threw up his arms, and plunged head-foremost into the stream. The water took a sanguine tint where he sunk.

"Keep on your course," said Lewis. "By Jove, I mean to make them trouble with this little piece. That rascal went out of sight quickly enough. Paddle with all your might. I am taxing your strength, my darling, but you know what it is for."

"And you know that you have only to speak, and I obey you," she said. "What am I that I should ask questions? I am yours for life or death. For life, if it *may* be, for death, if it *must*."

She never ceased to paddle as she spoke, her head thrown forward, her teeth set, the breath coming hard between them. The death of the bowman had created some confusion in the canoe, and there was a change on the part of the paddlers, the man who had been seated next to the bow moving out to take the head, though evidently in dread of the carbine. Three minutes had hardly passed, when the weapon cracked again, and the fatal bullet sped on its errand of death. The man in the bow, shot through the head, dropped across the gunwale of the canoe, careening her in a frightful manner. Barbed Arrow, who sat next, gave the body a push and it slid into the stream, and then moved up to take the vacant place.

They were near enough now so that the captain could see who it was that took the seat.

"Barbed Arrow is there," he said. "Shall I shoot him?"

"Barbed Arrow was always kind to Swaying Reed," she answered. "Who sits next?"

"Burnt Snake."

"Can you hit him?"

"I think so."

"Then shoot. It is right to kill a man who scalps a woman, and I have seen a scalp with long hair hang at his girdle."

The fatal carbine was again loaded and thrust over the side. Barbed Arrow, supposing that he must receive the fire, bowed his head at the moment he thought the young captain about to fire. But the bullet was not meant for him. It struck Burnt Snake in the breast, and he fell bleeding at the bottom of the boat. The Indians uttered furious yells and bent to their work with double energy. But, the point was reached and the fugitives landed, just as the pursuers were handling their weapons to fire.

"Hist, there!" said a low voice. "Into the bush with you, and get ready your weepens."

They obeyed the welcome summons. The bushes hid them from view just as the prow of the pursuing canoe struck the shore, and the enemy came bounding to the land, flourishing their weapons overhead. As they did so, a blaze of fire seemed to burst from the foliage in front and swept them down like chaff before the wind. Not a man was left on his feet. Le Renard fell. Barbed Arrow was shot through the bosom and fell in his tracks, the ferocity of his countenance as he lay showing that the revelation which Le Renard had made had taken all pity out of his heart. But, even in death, there was something grand in his attitude.

After that single fire, the captain turned to see who had rescued him. Tom Turner was there. Bates and Sloan, with smoking rifles, stood near him. Nat Hazard was with them. Blackwing was already scalping the fallen Indians, and no one opposed him.

"Cap'n," said Tom Turner, "we do deserve any hard words you kin give us, but we ask you to look it over. It's a thing

that never kin happen again. I'd sooner die than feel so 'like a sneak and coward as I have all day."

"I thought you were twenty miles down the river by this time," said Lewis, in great surprise. "What does it mean?"

"Who could stand it, cap'n? We marched mebbe ten miles, and every man of us felt like a dog. By-an'-by I said, 'Let's go back. By Jinks, I *can't* leave the capt'in thar alone.' The boys had only bin a-waitin' for me to say that, an' back we cum. When we got here it were dark an' we camped. Nat Hazard cum here five minnits ago, an' we got ready to give them Injins the devil. We did it too. Do you forgive us?"

"Yes. You have shown that you were not cowards by returning. An offense is atoned for with contrition. Where is Swaying Reed?"

She had fainted. The brave girl, who had endured so much, now that the danger was over, had fallen to the ground. As he lifted and took her to his heart, the men turned away and looked after the Indian dead. Blackwing was hovering over the form of Le Renard, in considerable hesitation.

"Got *good* scalp," he said. "But him say he want it he *own* self."

Nat bent over the Frenchman. An expression of rage and hatred passed over his dying face.

"You are there, eh?" he whispered. "Oh, if I had strength to plunge a knife into your heart, I should die contented."

"All right, Mister Fox," said Nat. "You ain't strong enough. Got any thing to say before you go?"

"Am I sure to die?"

"Never seen any one hit whar you ar' git over it. You ar' goin' clean over Jordan, this time, and a dozen priests couldn't keep the devil from his own now."

"Then hear this. Be proud of your exploit. You have saved the people of the Mohawk valley. In less than two weeks I would have laid the country waste, from the Oswego to the Hudson. I am dying. I curse you. I curse all here. Oh, France, France!"

And with the name of his country on his lips he fell back and expired. They would not let the Oneida take his scalp, but buried him where he fell. This done, they took the canoes

and went on their way, easily keeping out of the way of the footmen, who had been sent down the stream.

There is little more to tell. Lewis Miller was not ungrateful to the noble girl who had saved his life, and she became his wife. Living with civilized people, she took to their ways with wonderful quickness, and three years after no one who had not heard her story would have imagined that she had Indian blood in her veins.

Mohawk Nat lived and died a hunter and ranger. **Black-wing** was his constant friend.

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